

NO. 715 RS. 30



Ramanuja





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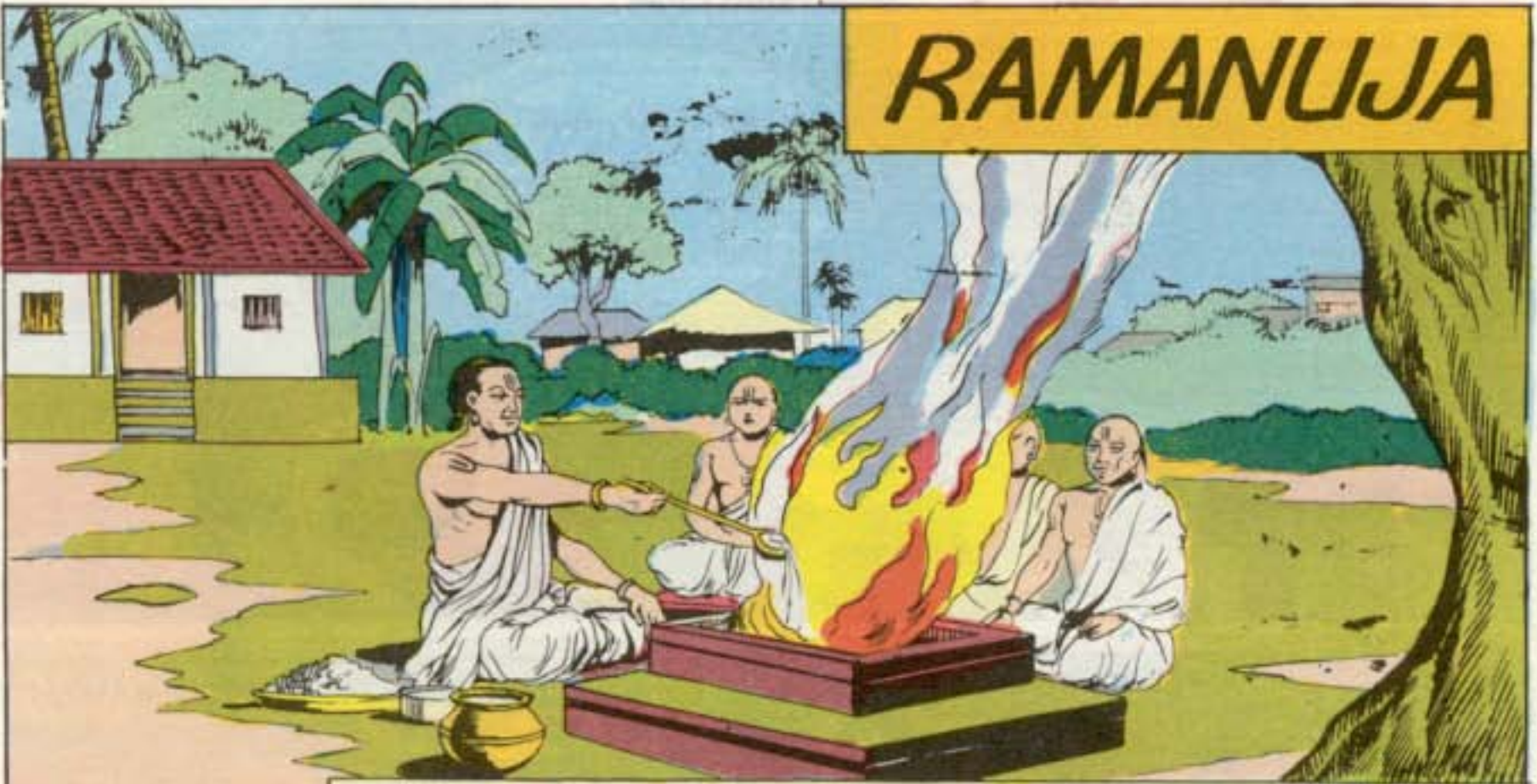
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INDIA BOOK HOUSE

RAMANUJA



AGURI KESHAVACHARYA, A DEVOUT BRAHMANA OF SRIPERAMBUDUR, PERFORMED A FIRE SACRIFICE AS HE DESIRED A SON.

IN DUE COURSE, HIS WIFE, KANTIMATI, GAVE BIRTH TO A SON. HER BROTHER, THE PIOUS SHAILA PURNA, CALLED ON THE COUPLE AND BLESSED THE CHILD.

YOUR SON WILL BE AS DEVOTED TO GOD AS LAKSHMANA WAS TO RAMA. CALL HIM RAMANUJA.

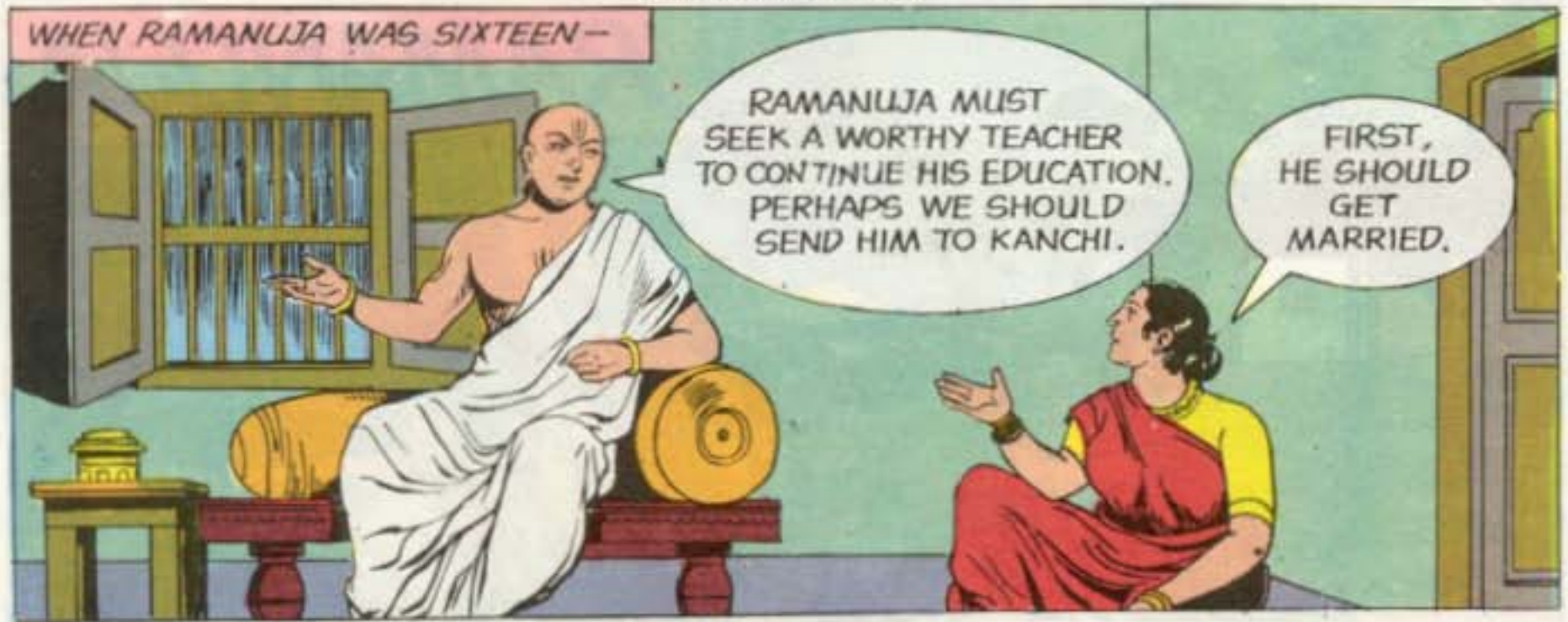


RAMANUJA GREW UP TO BE AN INTELLIGENT BOY. HIS COUSIN, GOVINDA, WAS HIS CONSTANT COMPANION.

RAMANUJA IS VERY KEEN ON LEARNING.



WHEN RAMANUJA WAS SIXTEEN—



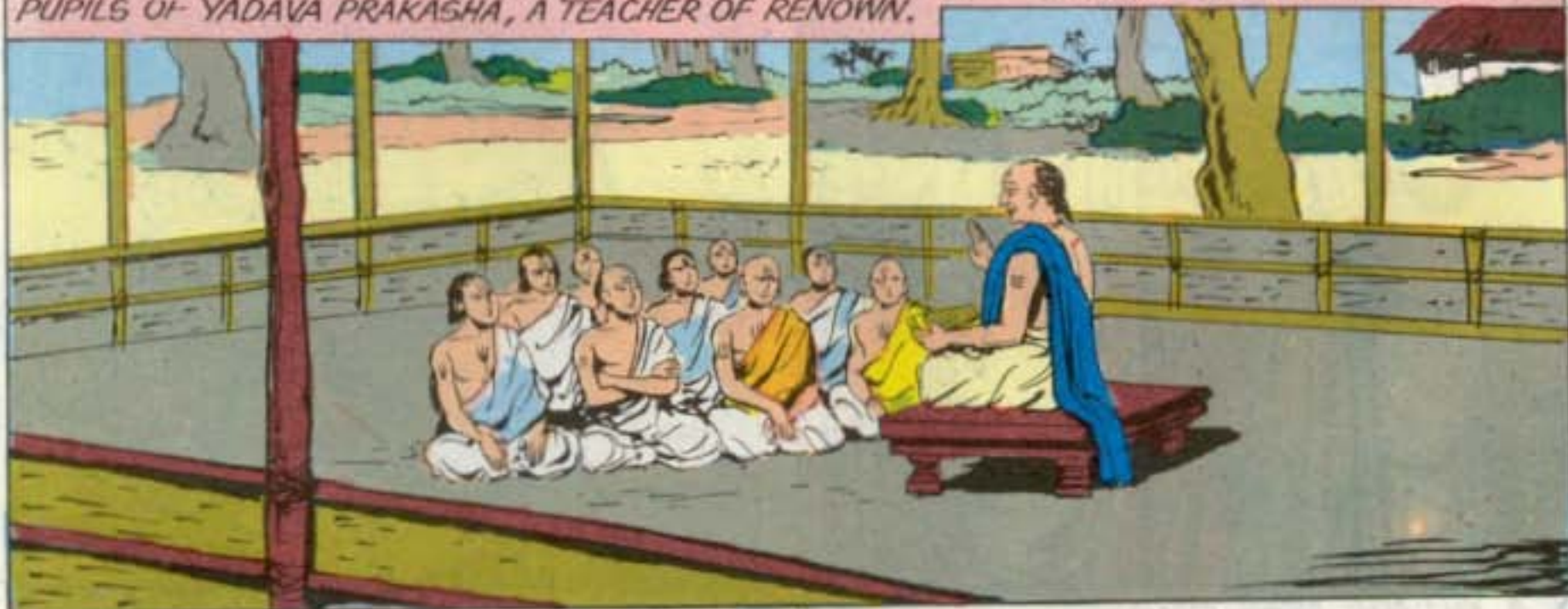
RAMANUJA WAS MARRIED TO A BEAUTIFUL GIRL.



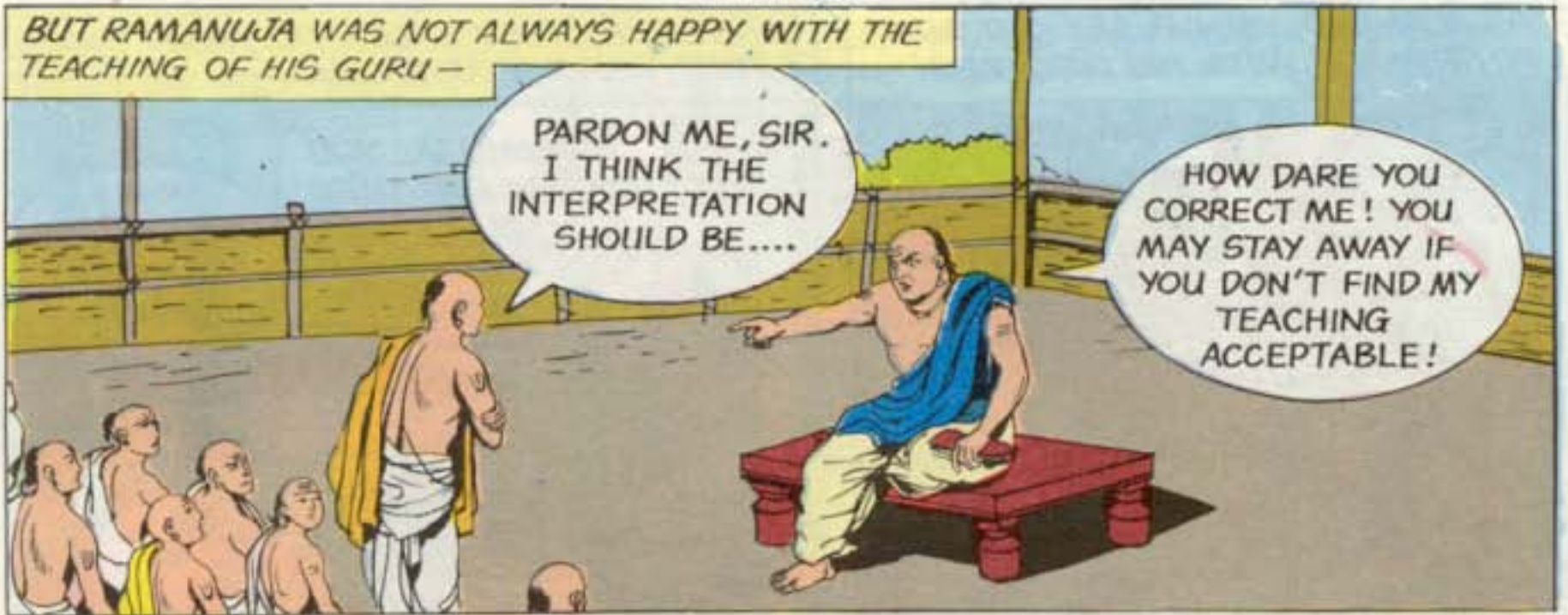
A SHORT TIME AFTER THIS, RAMANUJA LOST HIS FATHER.



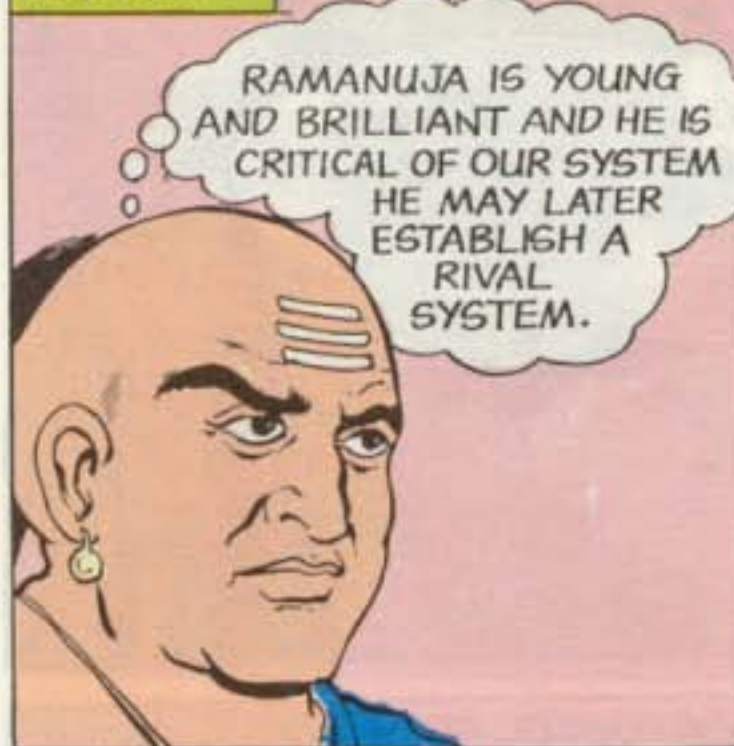
RAMANUJA LEFT HIS ANCESTRAL VILLAGE AND SETTLED DOWN AT KANCHI WHICH WAS, IN THOSE DAYS, A GREAT CENTRE OF LEARNING. GOVINDA WENT WITH HIM. THEY BECAME THE PUPILS OF YADAVA PRAKASHA, A TEACHER OF RENOWN.



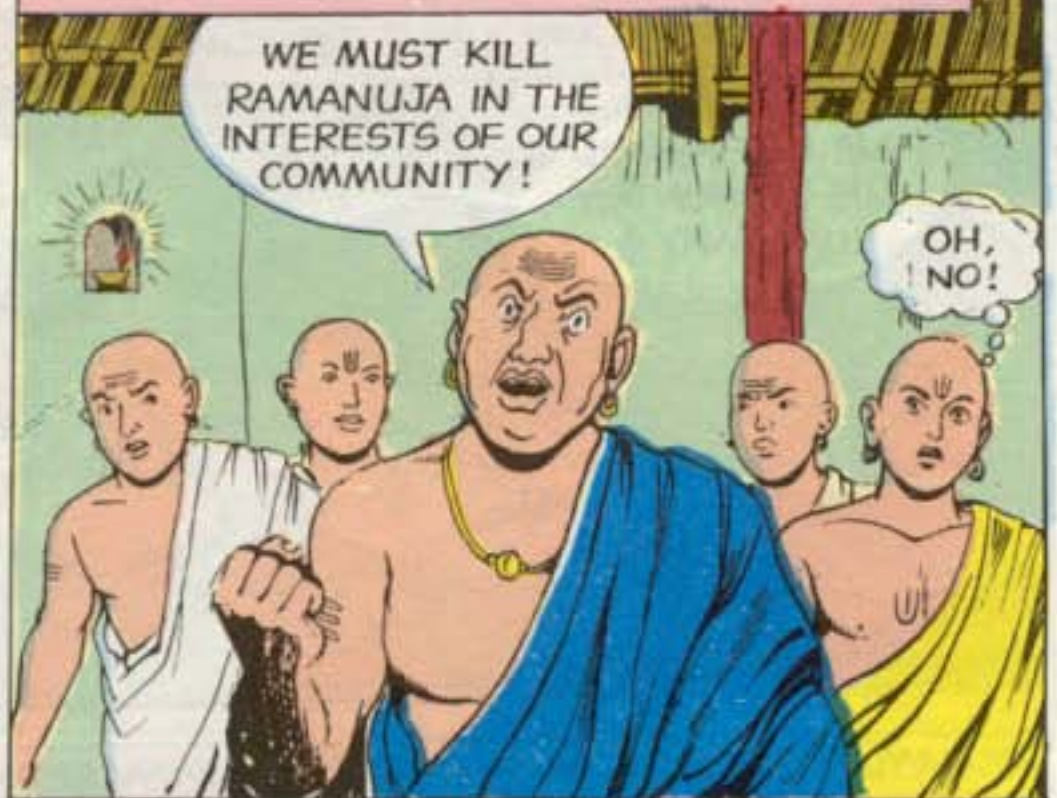
BUT RAMANUJA WAS NOT ALWAYS HAPPY WITH THE TEACHING OF HIS GURU -



YADAVA COULD NOT FORGET THE INCIDENT.



LATER HE CALLED HIS DISCIPLES TOGETHER.



AS PLANNED, YADAVA SET OUT ON A PILGRIMAGE WITH HIS DISCIPLES.



ON THE WAY, THEY SPENT THE NIGHT UNDER A TREE. BEFORE DAYBREAK—



WHEN GOVINDA TOLD HIM ABOUT THE CONSPIRACY—



RAMANUJA FINALLY YIELDED TO GOVINDA'S PLEAS.



THEN HE SAW A FOWLER AND HIS WIFE.





THE FOWLER COLLECTED SOME WOOD AND KINDLED A FIRE. THEY WERE ABOUT TO LIE DOWN TO REST WHEN THE WOMAN TURNED TO HER HUSBAND.



IN THE MORNING, THEY GOT UP AND RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY. AS THEY PASSED BY A TANK —



RAMANUJA PLUNGED INTO THE TANK AND REFRESHED HIMSELF.



THEN HE TOOK A HANDFUL OF WATER TO
THE FOWLER'S WIFE.



MOTHER, HERE
IS SOME
WATER FOR
YOU.

THE WOMAN DRANK THE WATER.



PLEASE
BRING ME
SOME MORE,
SON.

WHEN HE HAD BROUGHT MORE WATER—



BUT WHERE
HAVE THEY
GONE ?

SUDDENLY—

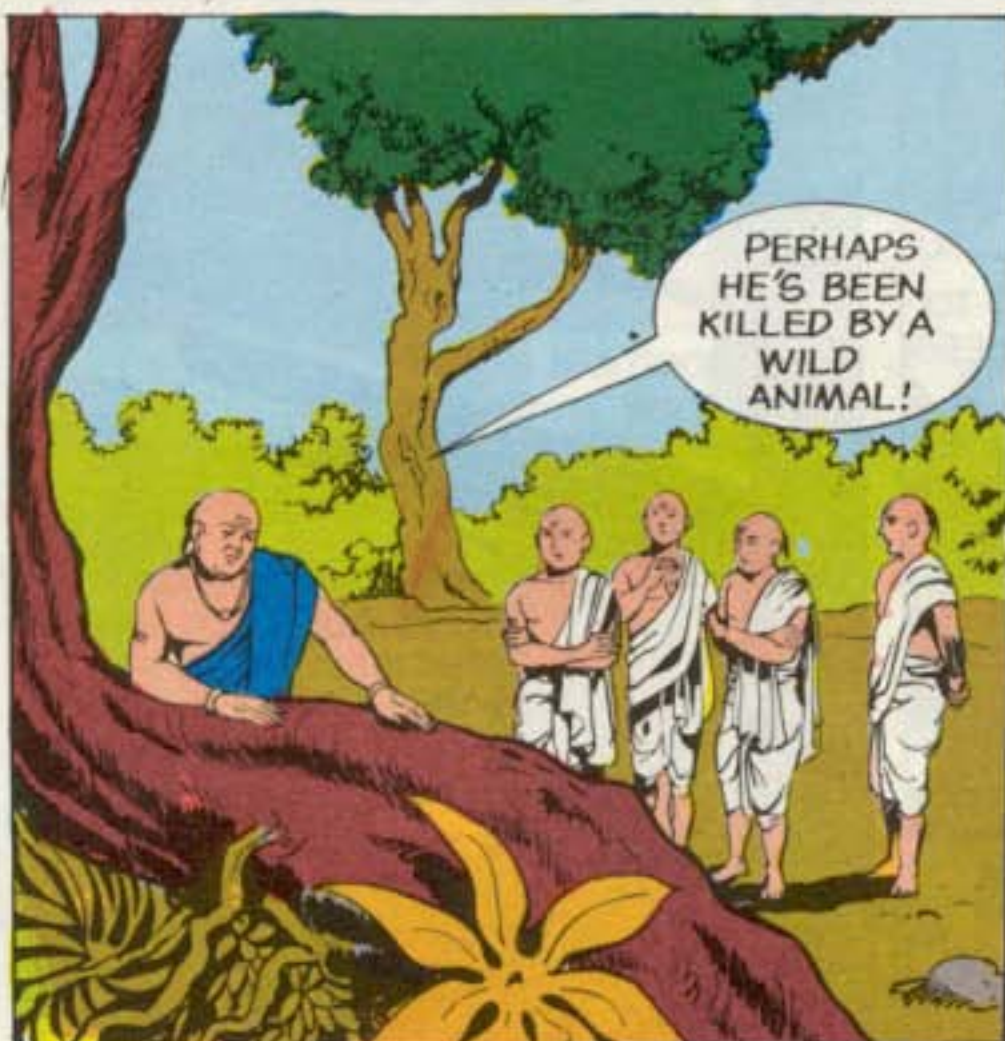
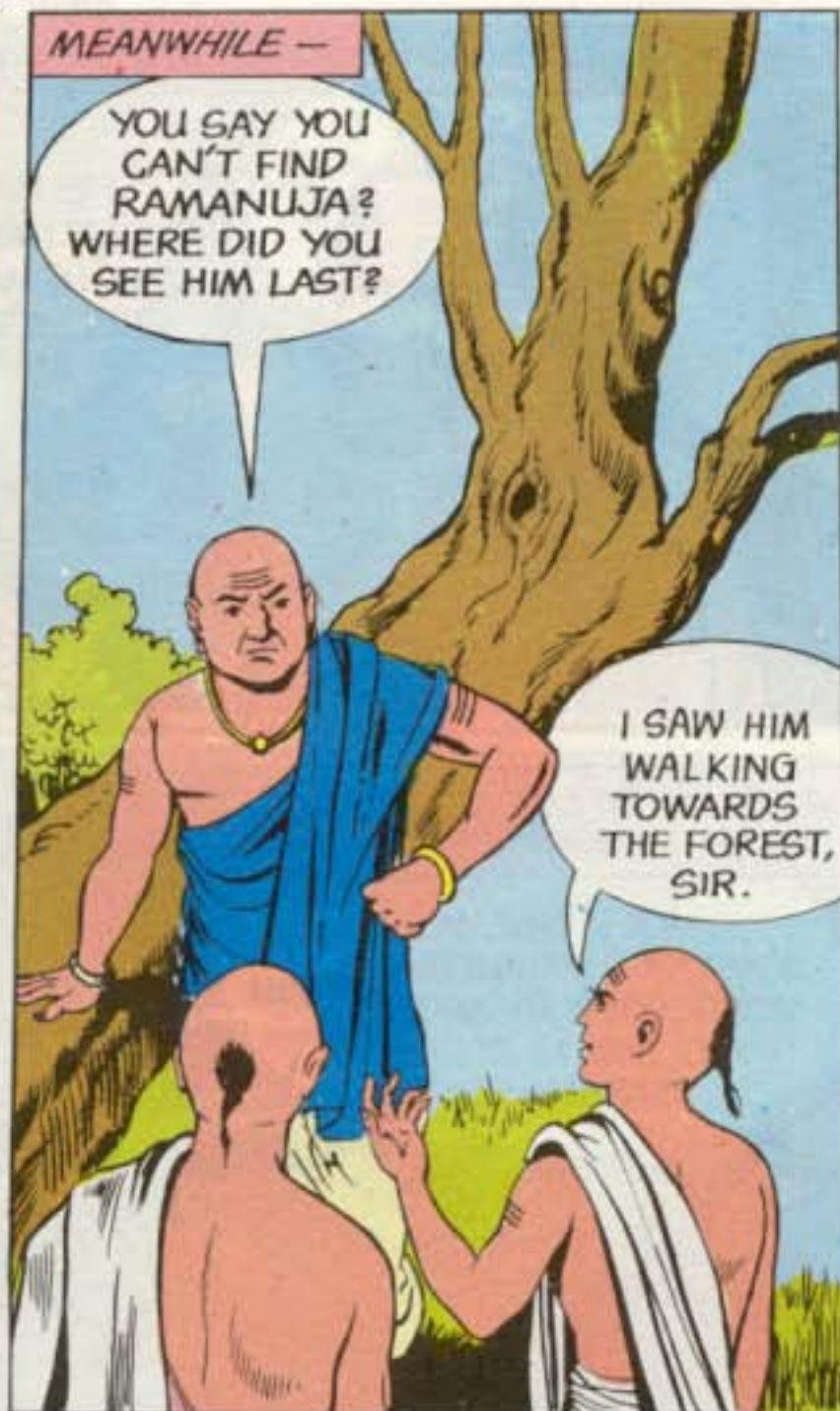


THE TEMPLE
TOWERS! I HAVE
REACHED THE OUT-
SKIRTS OF
KANCHI !

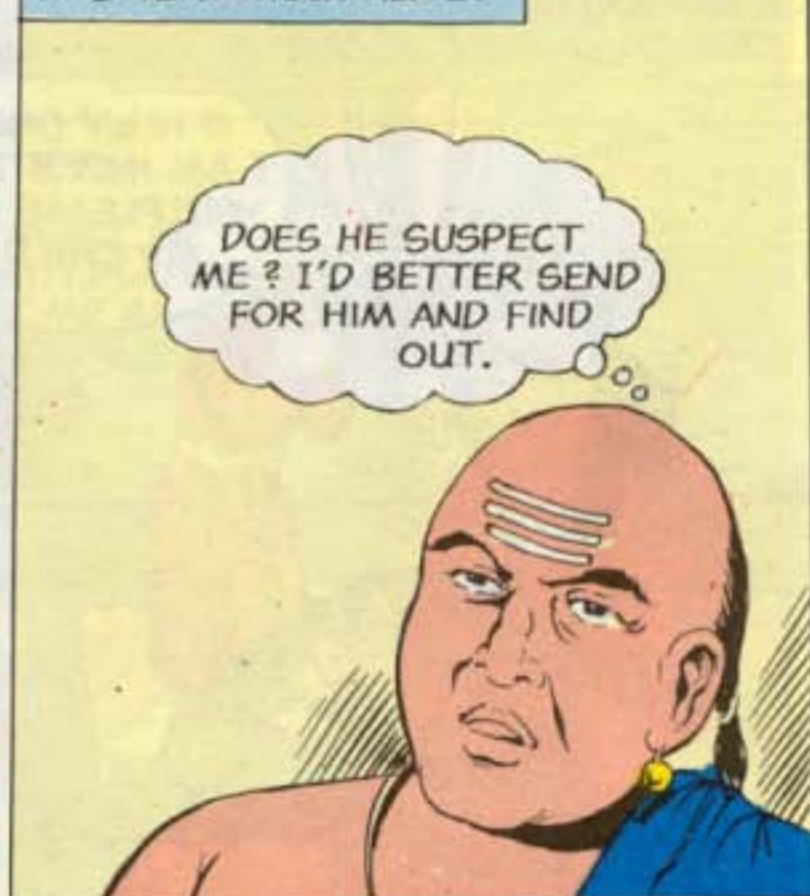
RAMANUJA WENT STRAIGHT TO THE TEMPLE OF LORD VARADARAJA.*



MEANWHILE —



ON HIS RETURN TO KANCHI, HOWEVER, YADAVA DISCOVERED THAT RAMANUJA WAS VERY MUCH ALIVE.



* ANOTHER NAME FOR LORD VISHNU

RAMANUJA ACCEPTED YADAVA'S INVITATION AND RESUMED HIS STUDIES CHEERFULLY.



A FEW DAYS LATER, THE LOCAL CHIEFTAIN SENT A MESSENGER TO YADAVA.

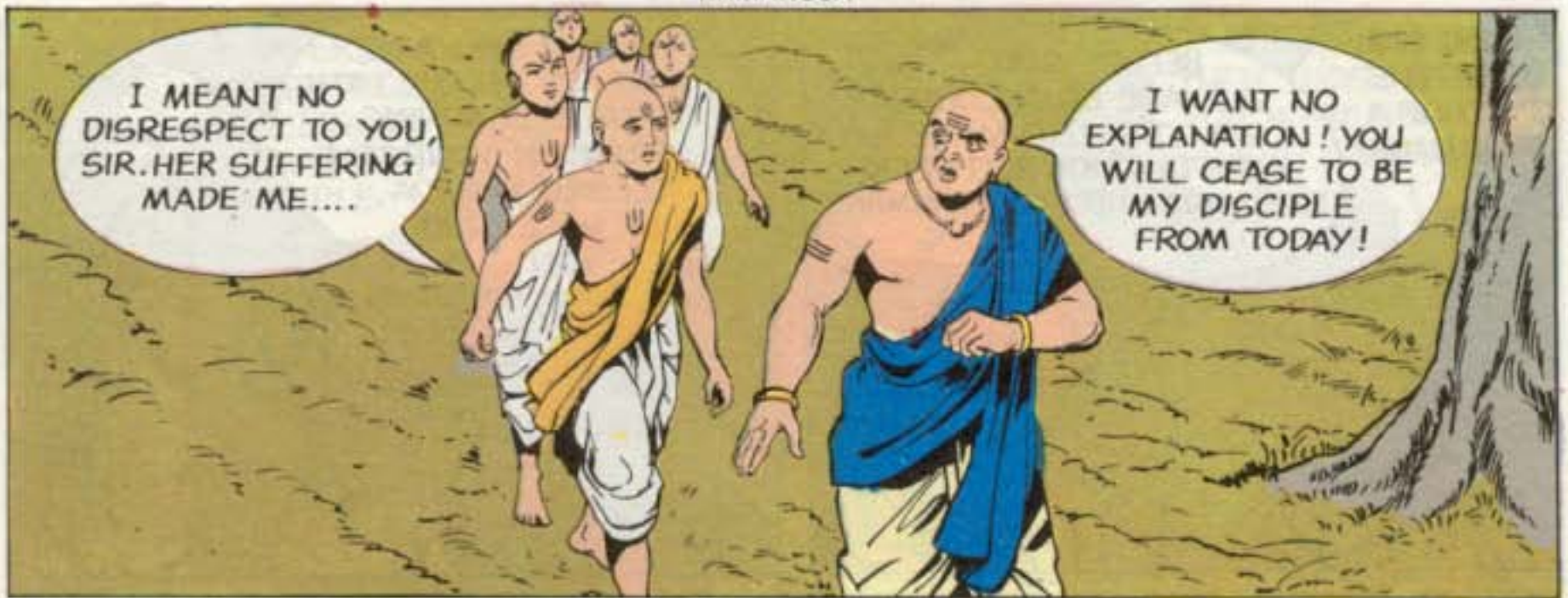


YADAVA WENT WITH HIS DISCIPLES. BUT HIS INCANTATIONS HAD NO EFFECT. IT WAS FINALLY RAMANUJA WHO EXORCISED THE EVIL SPIRIT.

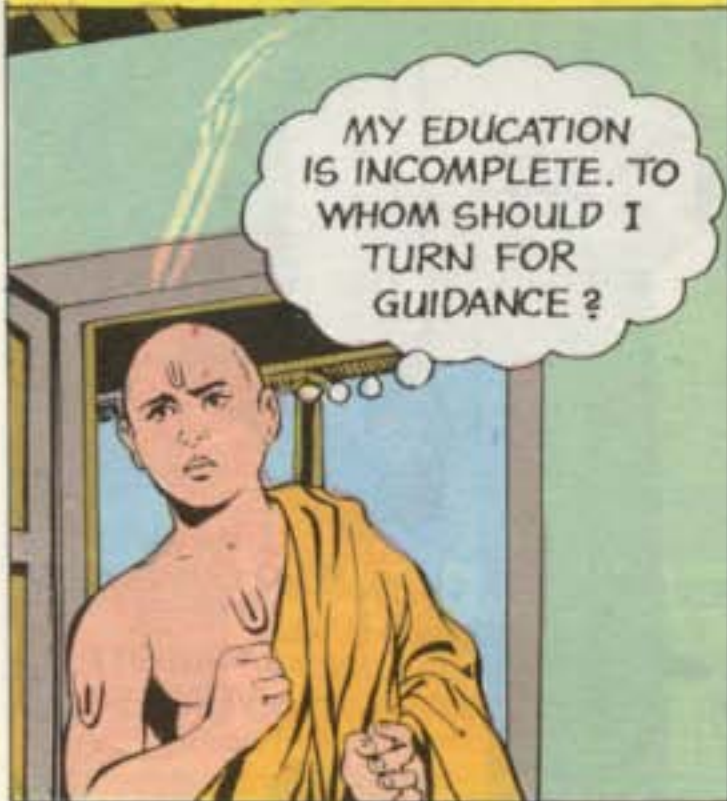


BURNING WITH SHAME AND JEALOUSY, YADAVA TURNED ON RAMANUJA AS SOON AS THEY WERE OUTSIDE.





RAMANUJA LEFT WITH A HEAVY HEART AND RETURNED HOME.

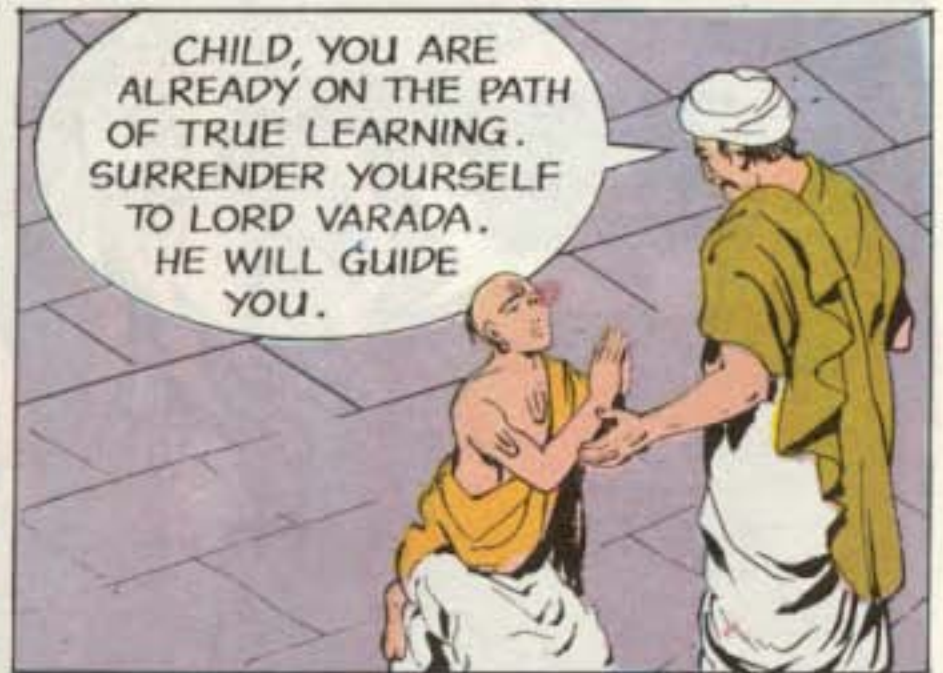
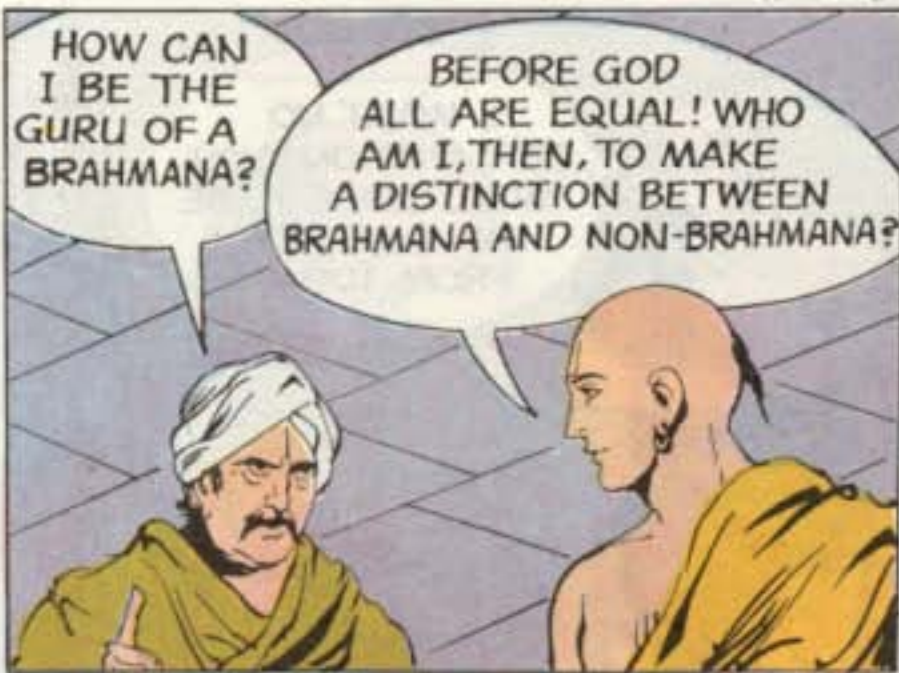


IT SO HAPPENED THAT KANCHI PURNA, A DEVOTEE OF LORD VARADARAJA, AND A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY, CALLED THAT DAY -



RAMANUJA TOLD HIM THE WHOLE STORY -





SO RAMANUJA WENT BACK TO KANCHI. THERE HE BEGAN TO SERVE THE LORD BY DAILY CARRYING WATER FROM THE LAKE TO THE TEMPLE.

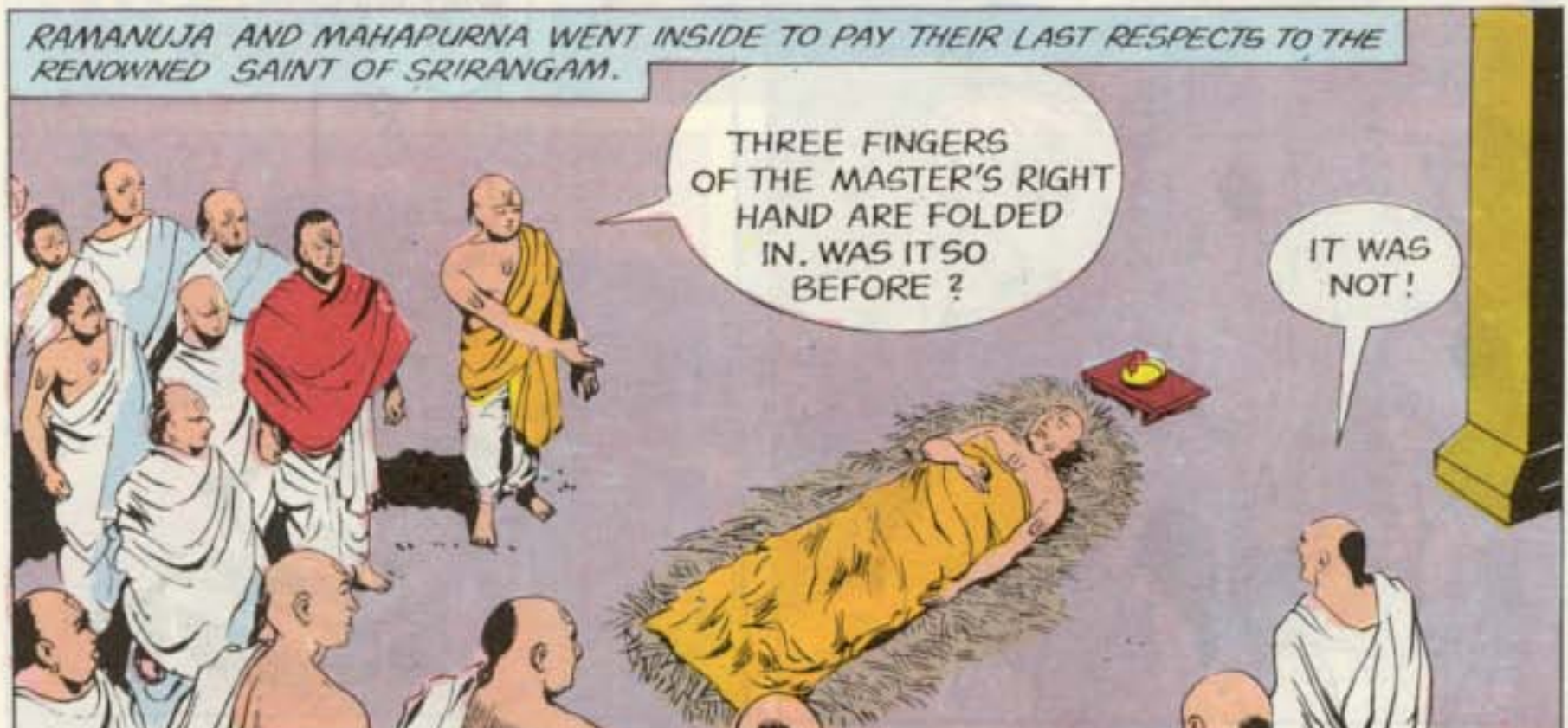
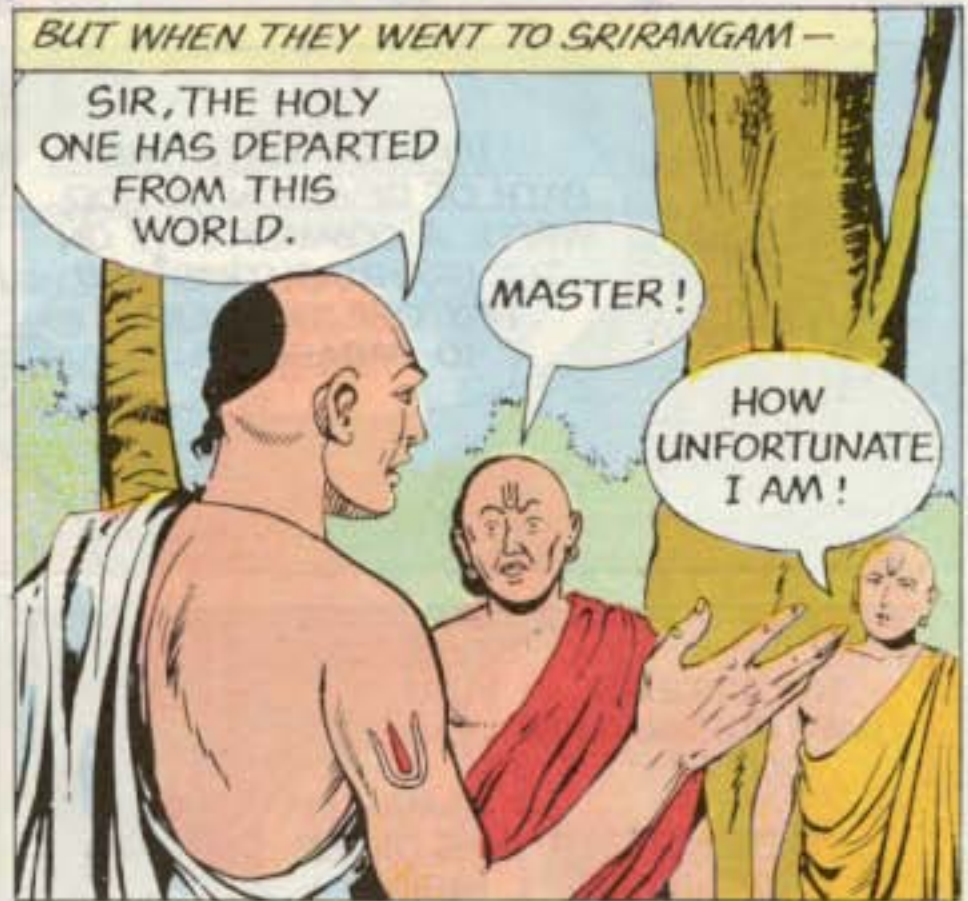


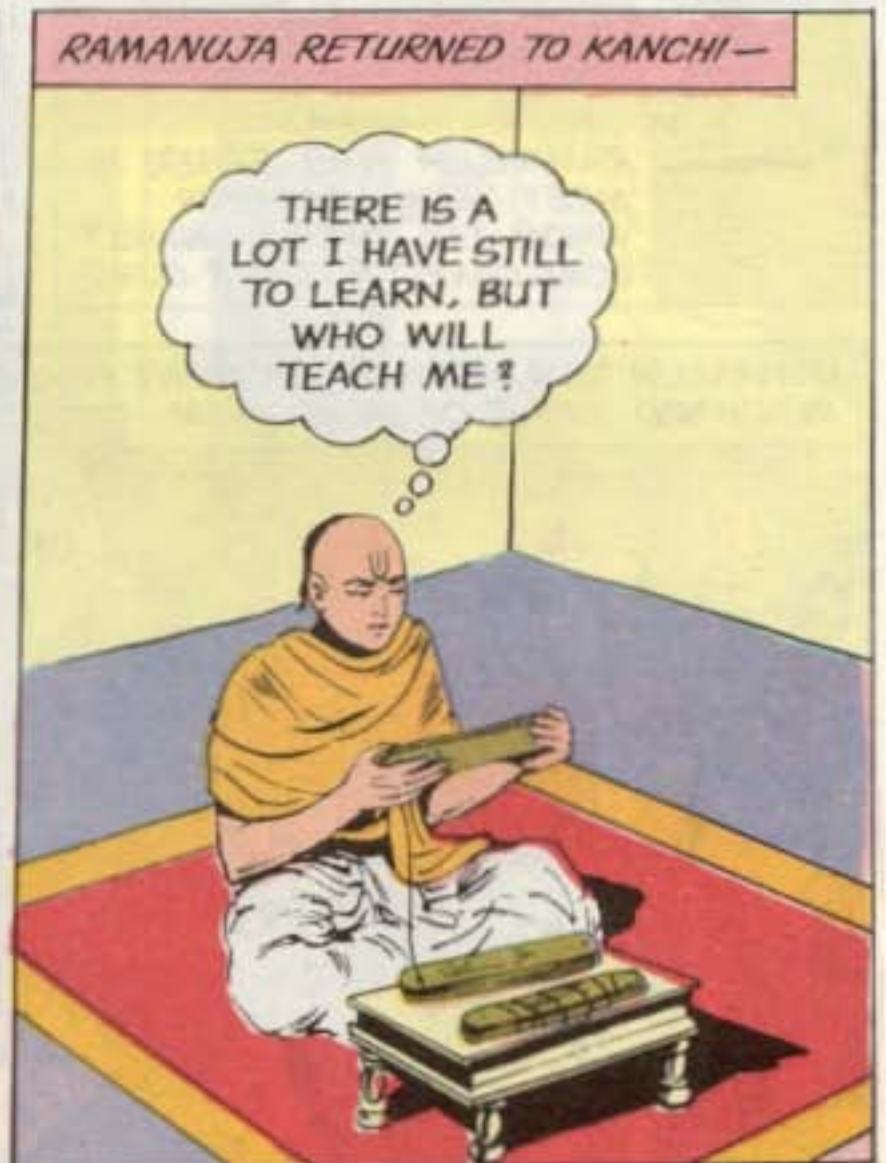
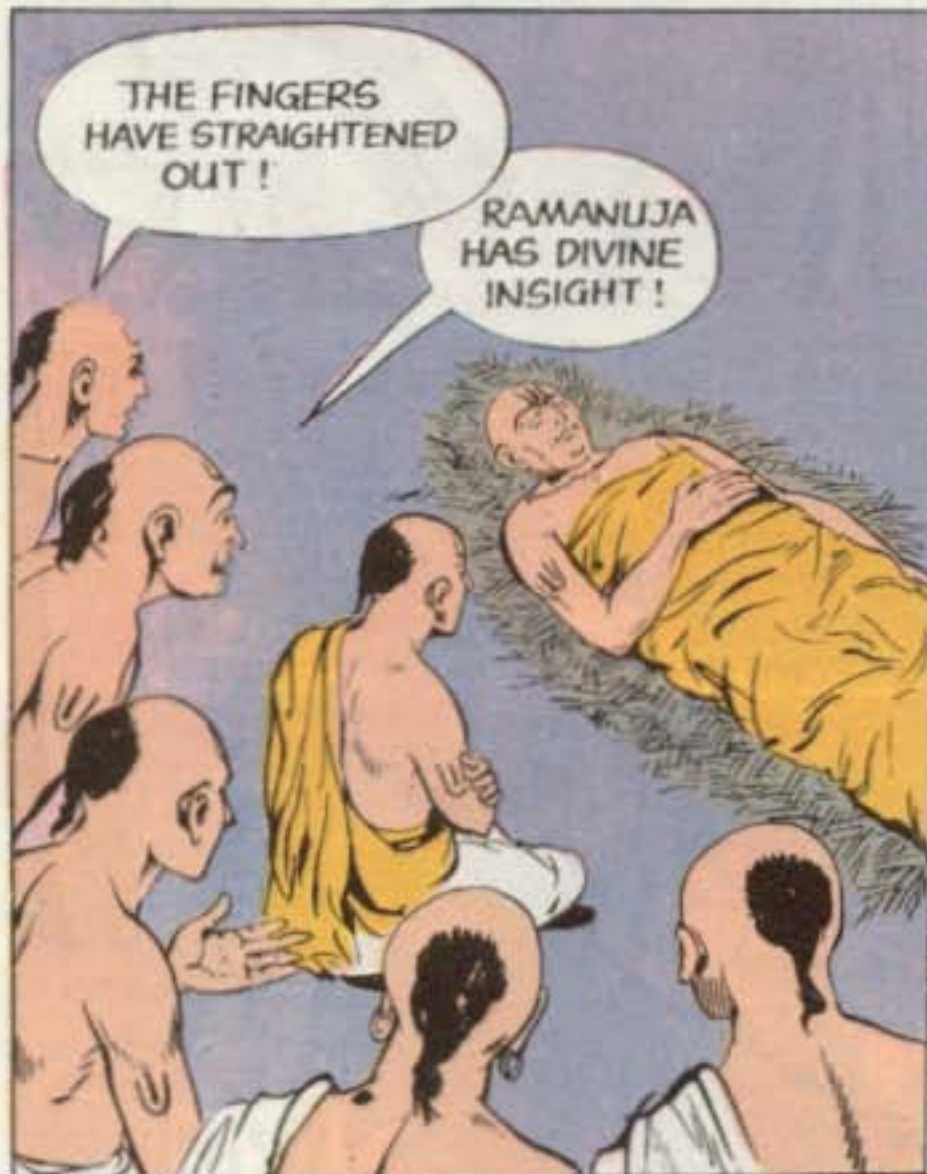
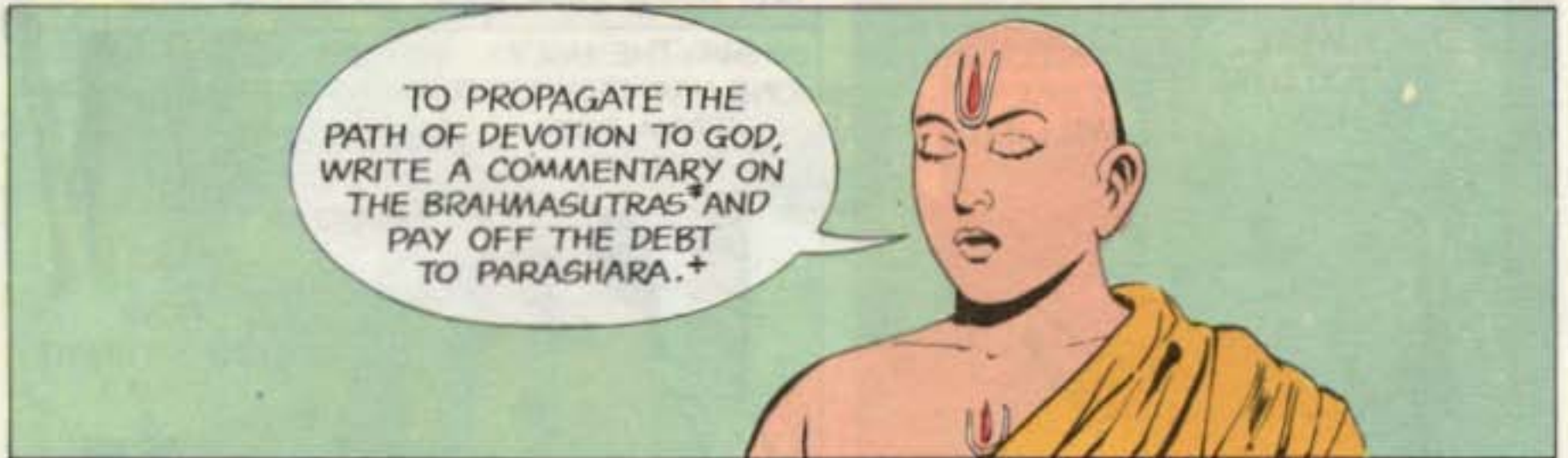
ONE DAY, HE HEARD A DEVOTEE RECITING VERSES IN PRAISE OF THE LORD.



RAMANUJA STOOD TRANSFIXED AS HE LISTENED TO THE VERSES. SUDDENLY HE REALISED THAT THE DEVOTEE WAS SPEAKING TO HIM.







*A PHILOSOPHICAL WORK WHICH EXPLAINS THE ESSENCE OF THE UPANISHADS.
+A GREAT SAGE, FATHER OF VEDAVYASA

ONE DAY—

RAMANUJA, LOOK FOR MAHAPURNA AND STUDY UNDER HIM. THIS IS THE WILL OF LORD VARADARAJA.

I WILL DO AS YOU SAY, O KANCHI PURNA.

RAMANUJA LEFT FOR SRIRANGAM. ON THE WAY—

RAMANUJA!

SIR!

IT WAS MAHAPURNA.

RAMANUJA, THE SRIVAISHNAVAS OF SRIRANGAM HAVE CHOSEN YOU TO BE ACHARYA* AND IT WILL BE MY TASK TO EQUIP YOU FOR THAT HIGH OFFICE.

I WAS ON MY WAY TO YOU— TO LEARN AT YOUR FEET.

TOGETHER THEY PROCEEDED TO KANCHI. UNDER MAHAPURNA, RAMANUJA STUDIED THE SCRIPTURES SACRED TO THE SRIVAISHNAVAS.

WHEN THIS TASK WAS COMPLETED, MAHAPURNA RETURNED HOME. RAMANUJA WENT TO THE TEMPLE OF LORD VARADARAJA TO TAKE THE VOWS OF SANYASA.

LORD, I DEDICATE MY LIFE TO YOU!

RAMANUJA'S FAME SPREAD FAR. HE ATTRACTED MANY DISCIPLES, DASHARATHI AND KURESHA BEING THE IMPORTANT ONES. ONE DAY YADAVA PRAKASHA HIMSELF CAME TO HIM.

RAMANUJA, YOU ALONE CAN SHOW ME THE RIGHT PATH. ACCEPT ME AS YOUR DISCIPLE.

THE OTHER NOTABLE CONVERSION TO RAMANUJA'S TEACHING WAS YAJNAMURTI, A RENOWNED SCHOLAR OF THE TIME.

ONE DAY, THE SRIVAISHNAVAS OF SRIRANGAM CAME TO KANCHI TO CLAIM RAMANUJA FOR THEIR TEMPLE.

MASTER, WE ARE WAITING FOR YOU. PLEASE DO NOT DELAY ANY FURTHER. COME AND SETTLE DOWN AT SRIRANGAM.

BEFORE RAMANUJA COULD ANSWER, THE PEOPLE OF KANCHI STOOD UP.

NO! YOU CAN'T TAKE AWAY THE ACHARYA FROM US! WE NEED HIM HERE!

THE SRIVAISHNAVAS OF SRIRANGAM RETURNED DEJECTED.

IT IS UNFORTUNATE. WHERE WILL WE FIND ANOTHER TEACHER LIKE RAMANUJA?

I WILL BRING THE ACHARYA TO YOU!

THE DEVOTEE WHO HAD STEPPED FORWARD WAS RANGA PERUMAL, A GREAT MUSICIAN OF THE TIME.

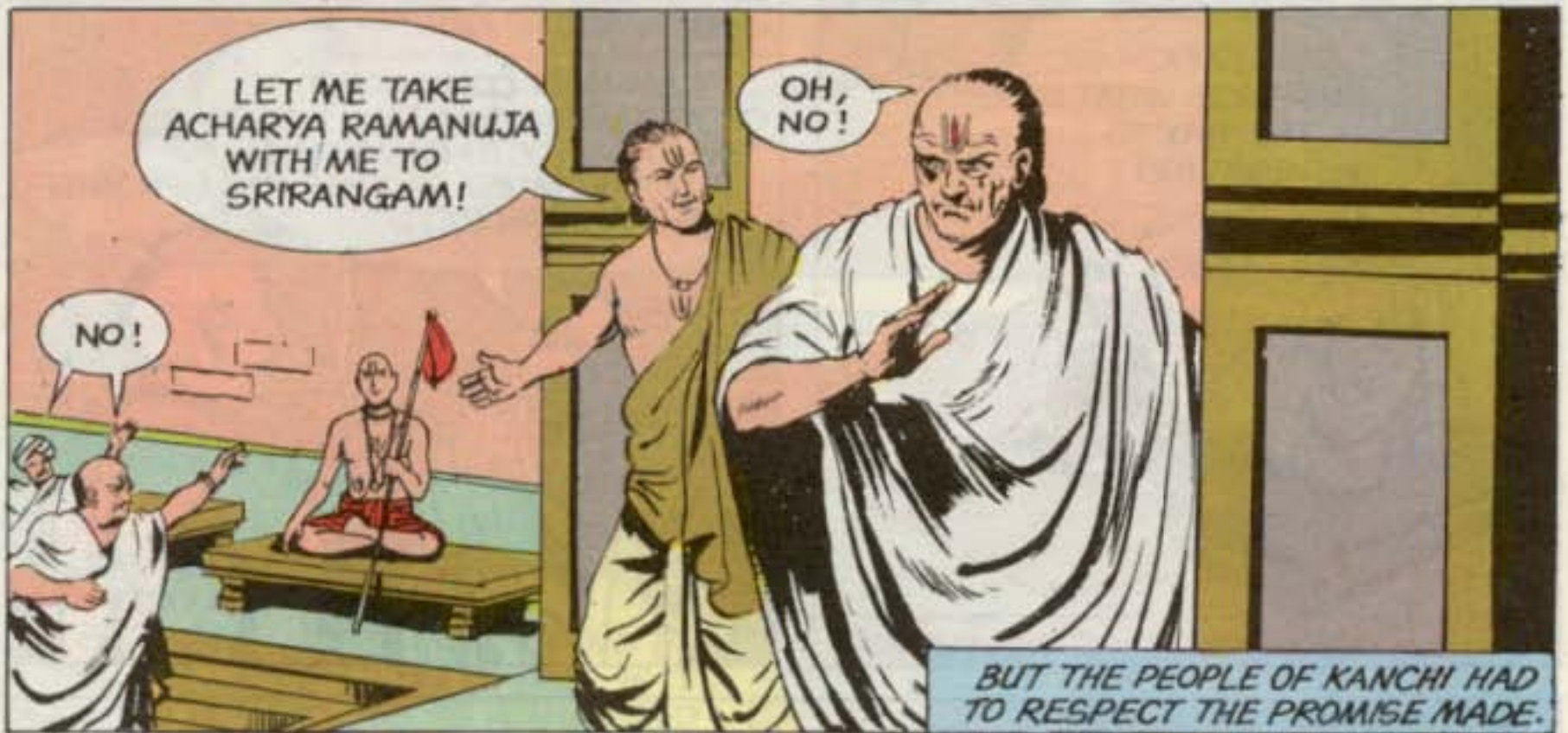
RANGA PERUMAL WENT TO KANCHI. AT THE TEMPLE OF VARADARAJA, HE BEGAN TO SING DEVOTIONAL SONGS.

WHAT A MELODIOUS VOICE!

THIS IS A NEW EXPERIENCE!

WHEN HE HAD FINISHED, THE CHIEF PRIEST TURNED TO HIM.

SIR, NEVER BEFORE HAVE WE EXPERIENCED SUCH JOY. TELL US HOW WE CAN REWARD YOU. ASK FOR ANYTHING!



BUT THE PEOPLE OF KANCHI HAD TO RESPECT THE PROMISE MADE.

RAMANUJA RECEIVED A ROUSING WELCOME AT SRIRANGAM.



LATER, WHEN MAHAPURNA CALLED ON HIM—

PEOPLE CALL ME
ACHARYA. BUT I DO NOT
YET KNOW THE WAY
TO SALVATION.

GOSHTI PURNA
OF TIRUKKOTTI MAY BE
ABLE TO HELP
YOU.

RAMANUJA WENT TO GOSHTI PURNA.

SIR, I SEEK YOUR
GUIDANCE. WHAT IS
THE WAY TO
SALVATION?

GOSHTI PURNA DID NOT ANSWER.

RAMANUJA WENT TO HIM AGAIN AND
AGAIN, TILL AT LAST —

I AM NOW CONVINCED
OF YOUR DEVOTION. I WILL TELL
YOU THE WAY TO SALVATION
BUT YOU MUST PROMISE TO
KEEP IT A SECRET.

I PROMISE!

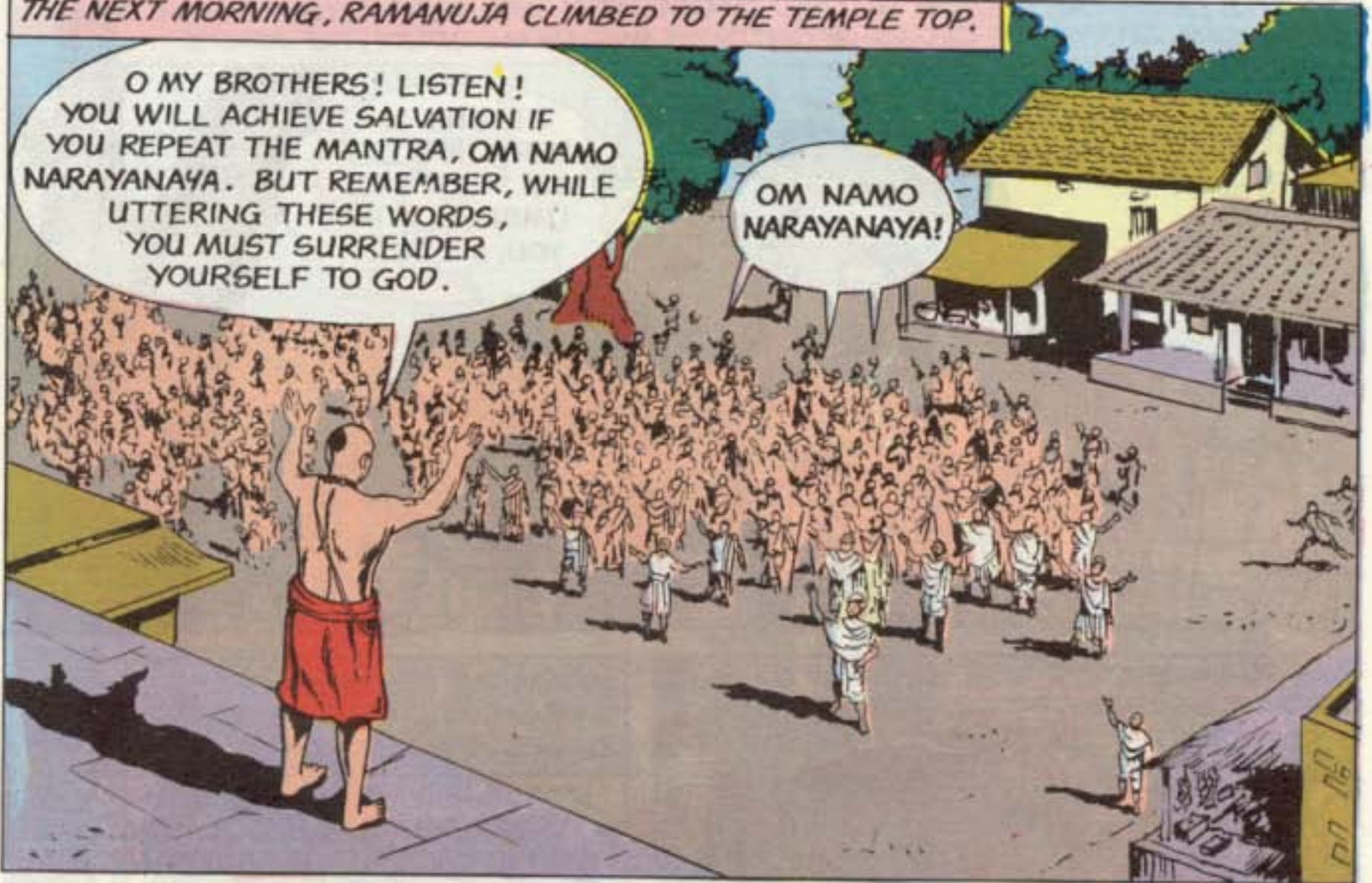
GOSHTI PURNA WHISPERED
IN HIS EAR —

OM NAMO
NARAYANAYA!

THE NEXT MORNING, RAMANUJA CLIMBED TO THE TEMPLE TOP.

O MY BROTHERS! LISTEN!
YOU WILL ACHIEVE SALVATION IF
YOU REPEAT THE MANTRA, OM NAMO
NARAYANAYA. BUT REMEMBER, WHILE
UTTERING THESE WORDS,
YOU MUST SURRENDER
YOURSELF TO GOD.

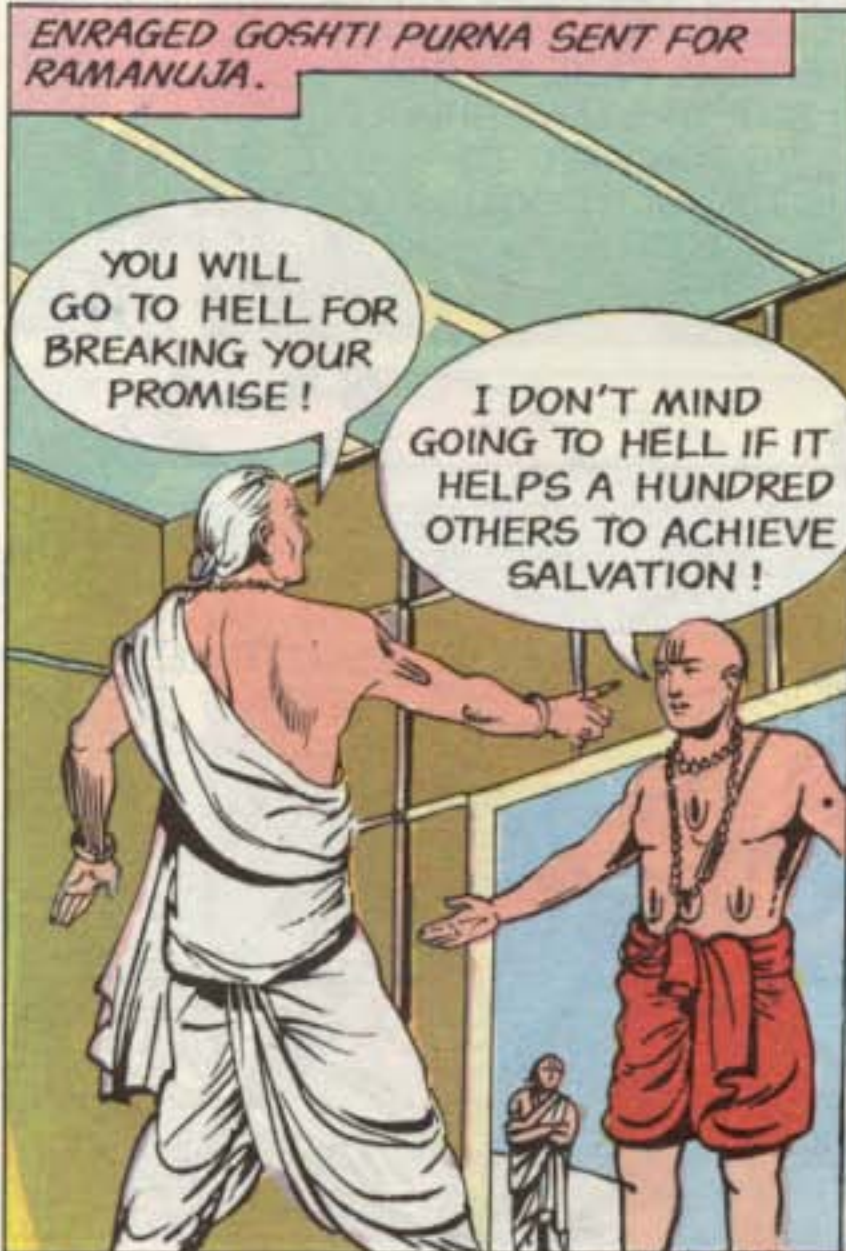
OM NAMO
NARAYANAYA!



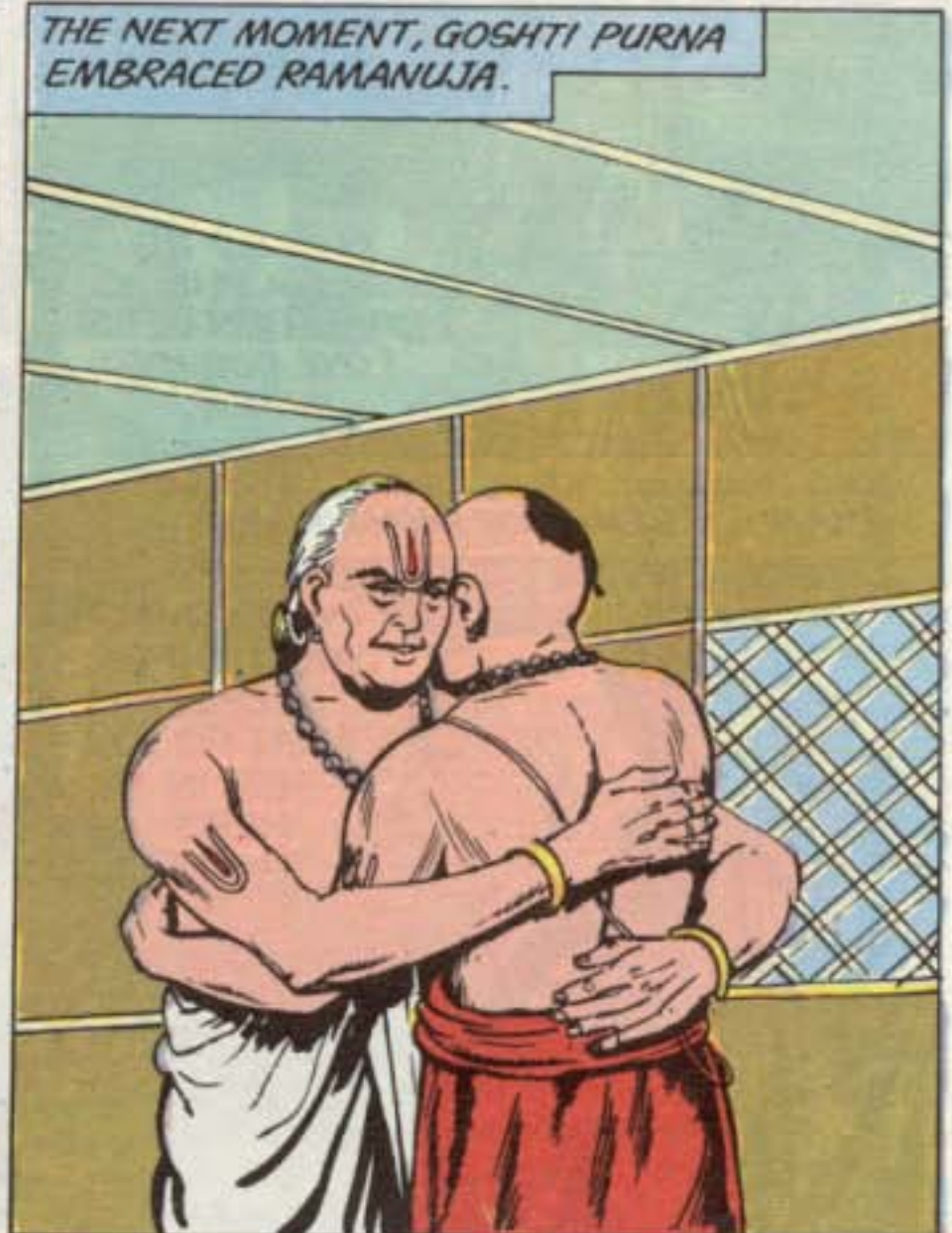
ENRAGED GOSHTI PURNA SENT FOR
RAMANUJA.

YOU WILL
GO TO HELL FOR
BREAKING YOUR
PROMISE!

I DON'T MIND
GOING TO HELL IF IT
HELPS A HUNDRED
OTHERS TO ACHIEVE
SALVATION!



THE NEXT MOMENT, GOSHTI PURNA
EMBRACED RAMANUJA.



A LITTLE LATER, THE FESTIVAL OF LORD RANGANATHA WAS BEING CELEBRATED AT SRIRANGAM. AMONG THE CROWD OF DEVOTEES WAS DHANURDASA, THE KING'S GUARD, ALONG WITH HIS WIFE.



THE OTHER DEVOTEES WERE SHOCKED BY DHANURDASA'S BEHAVIOUR.



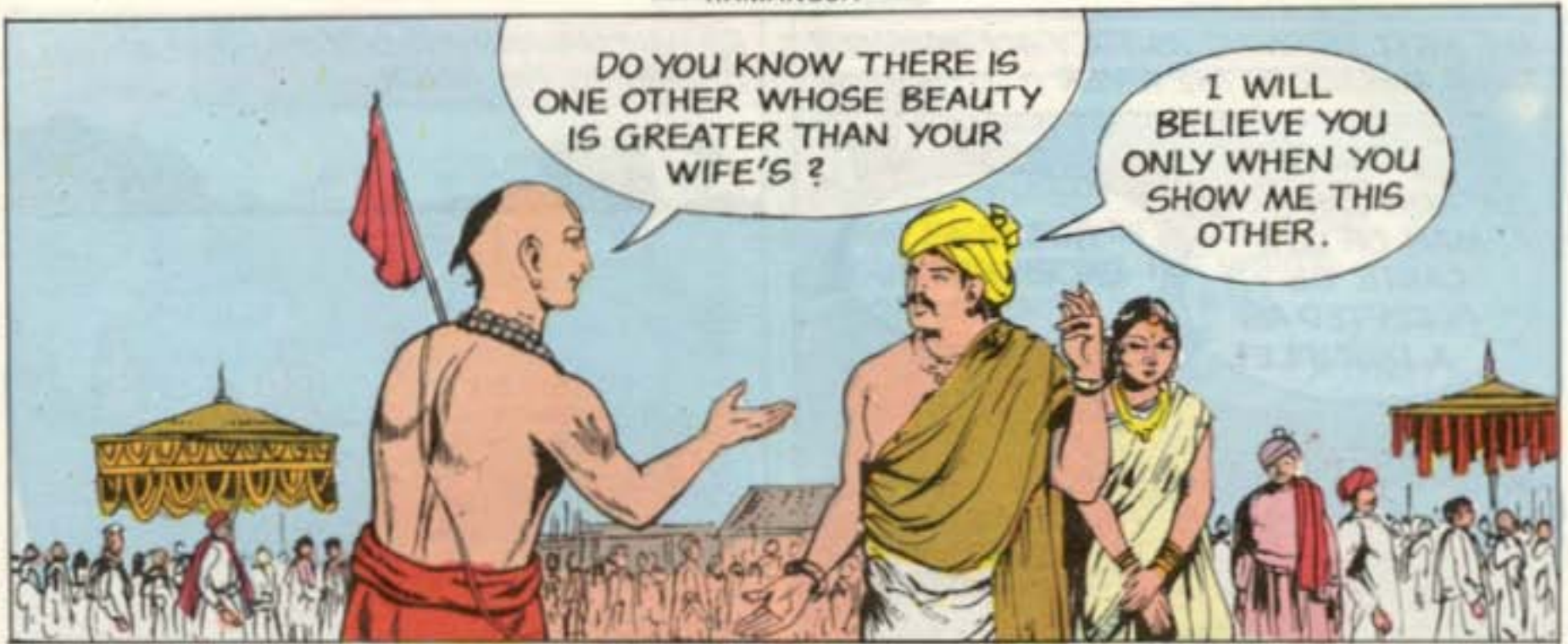
WHEN ONE OF THE DISCIPLES DREW RAMANUJA'S ATTENTION TO DHANURDASA'S BEHAVIOUR —

DON'T SCOFF AT HIM. A MAN WHO IS CAPABLE OF ABUNDANT LOVE, OBLIVIOUS OF HIS SURROUNDINGS, IS NOT EASILY TO BE FOUND. BUT THIS LOVE SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE RIGHT GOAL — GOD!



RAMANUJA SENT FOR DHANURDASA —





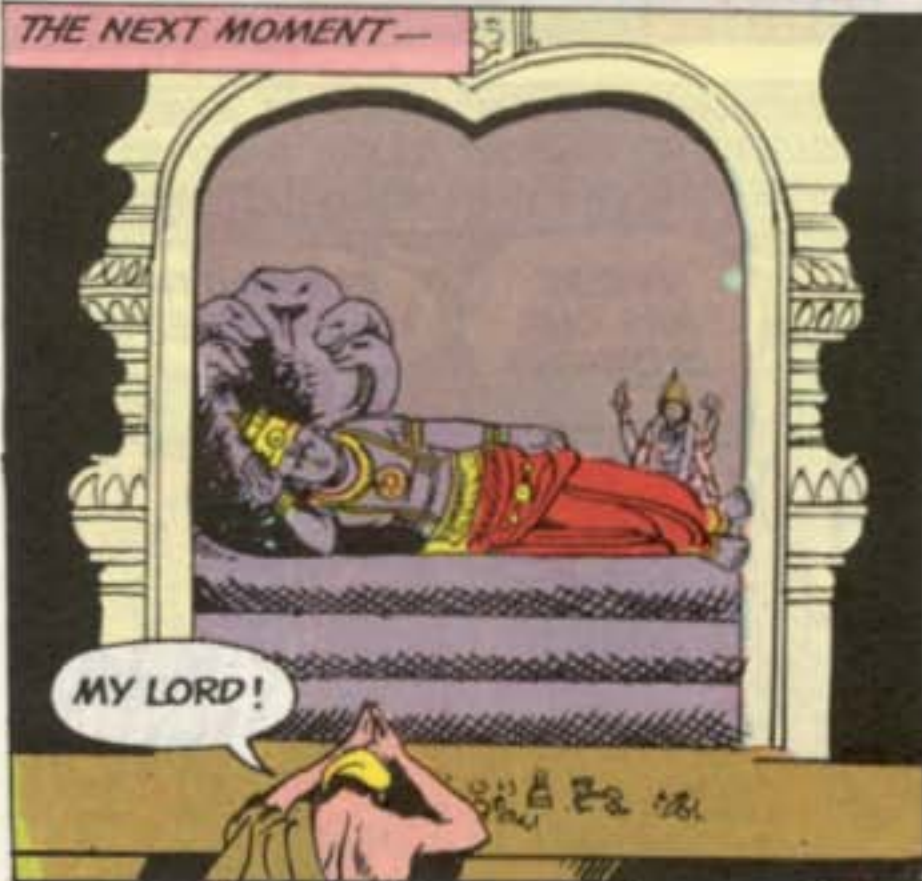
RAMANUJA TOOK HIM TO THE INNER SANCTUM OF THE TEMPLE.



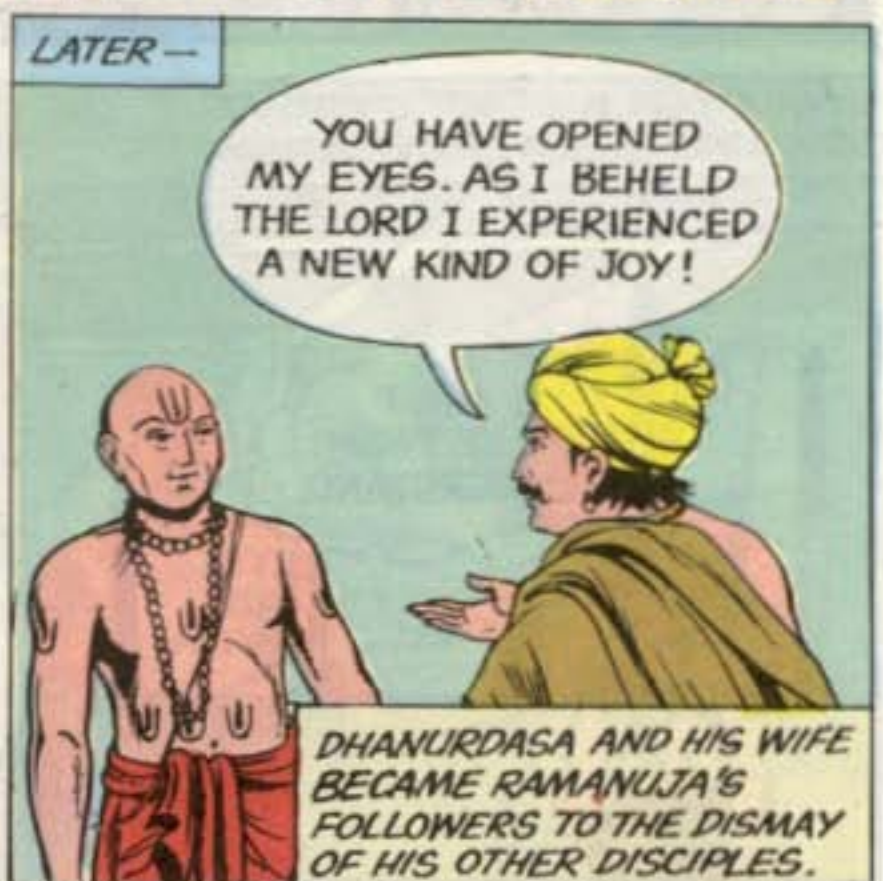
DHANURDASA STOOD MOTIONLESS, AS HE BEHELD THE LORD.



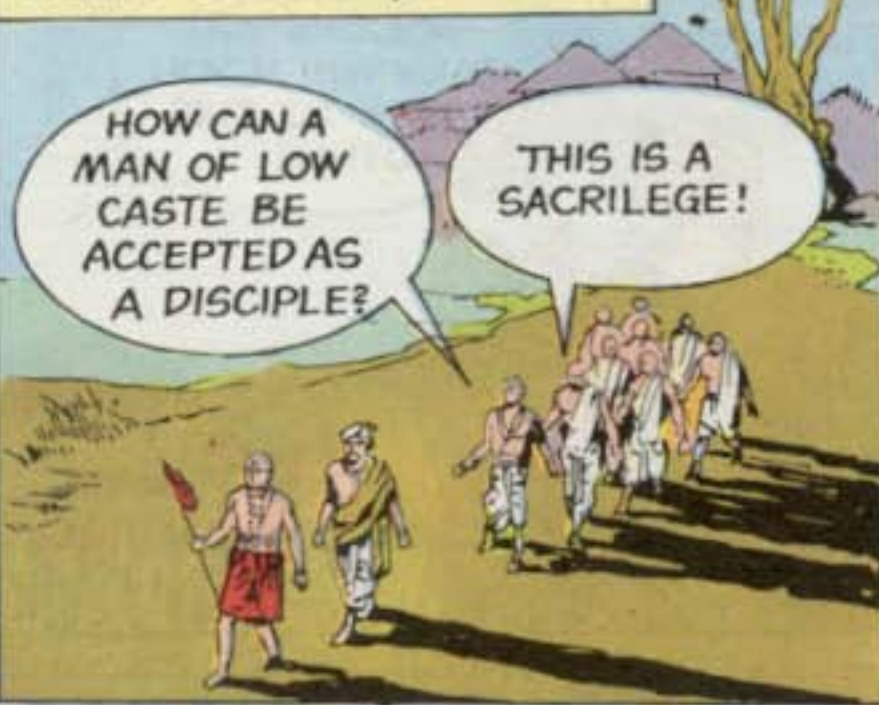
THE NEXT MOMENT —



LATER —



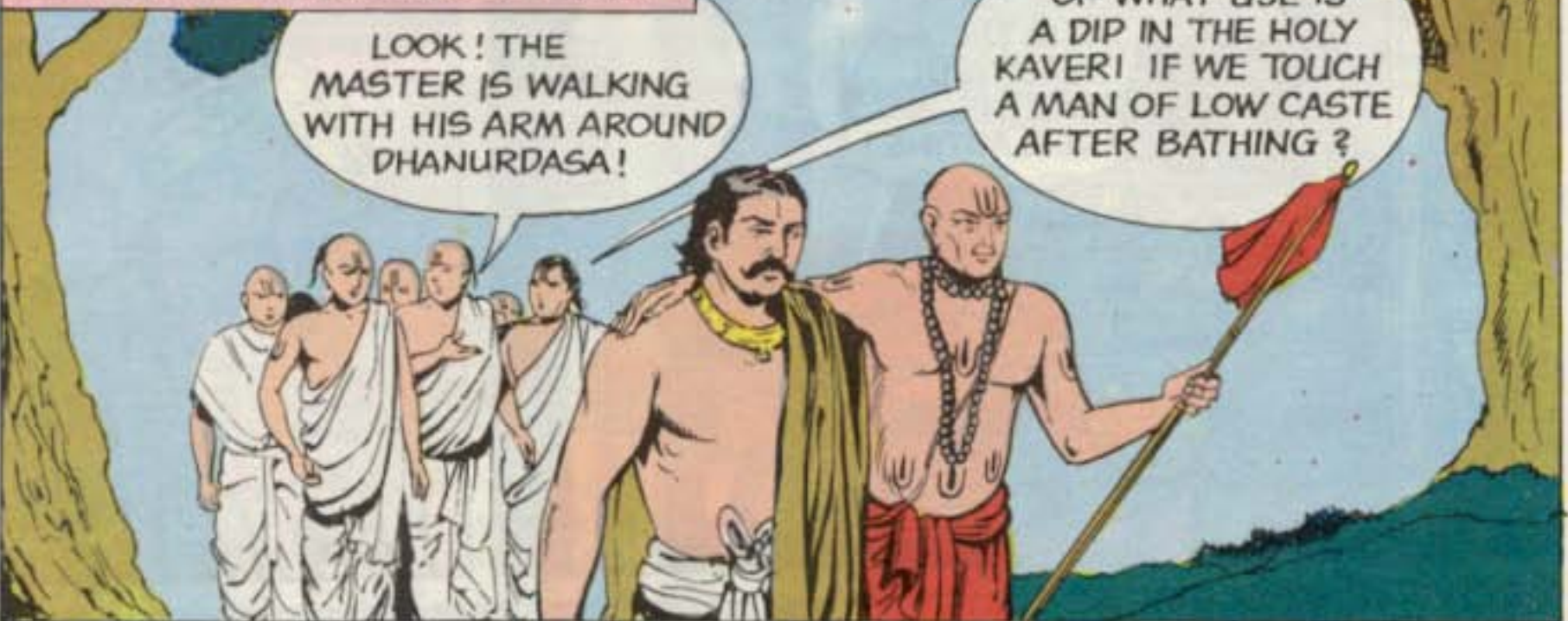
THE NEXT MORNING AS THEY ACCOMPANIED THEIR MASTER TO THE RIVER -



RAMANUJA AND HIS DISCIPLES BATHED IN THE RIVER...



...AND SET OUT AGAIN FOR THE MATH.*



RAMANUJA WAS NOT UNAWARE OF THE GROWING RESENTMENT AMONG HIS DISCIPLES.



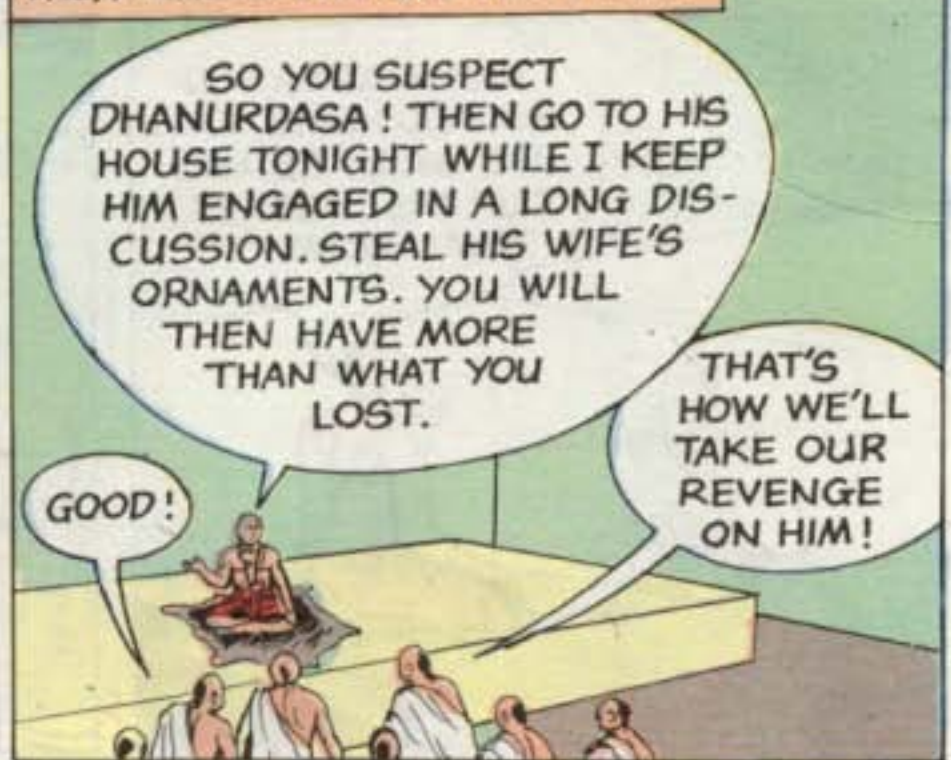
ONE DAY, AFTER THEIR DIP IN THE RIVER, THE DISCIPLES RETURNED TO THE MATH TO CHANGE INTO DRY CLOTHES.



THE DISCIPLES UTTERED A TORRENT OF ABUSE.



THEN RAMANUJA CALLED THEM.



THAT NIGHT THE DISCIPLES WENT TO DHANURDASA'S HOUSE.



THE DISCIPLES VERY SKILFULLY REMOVED HIS WIFE'S ORNAMENTS.



SUDDENLY —

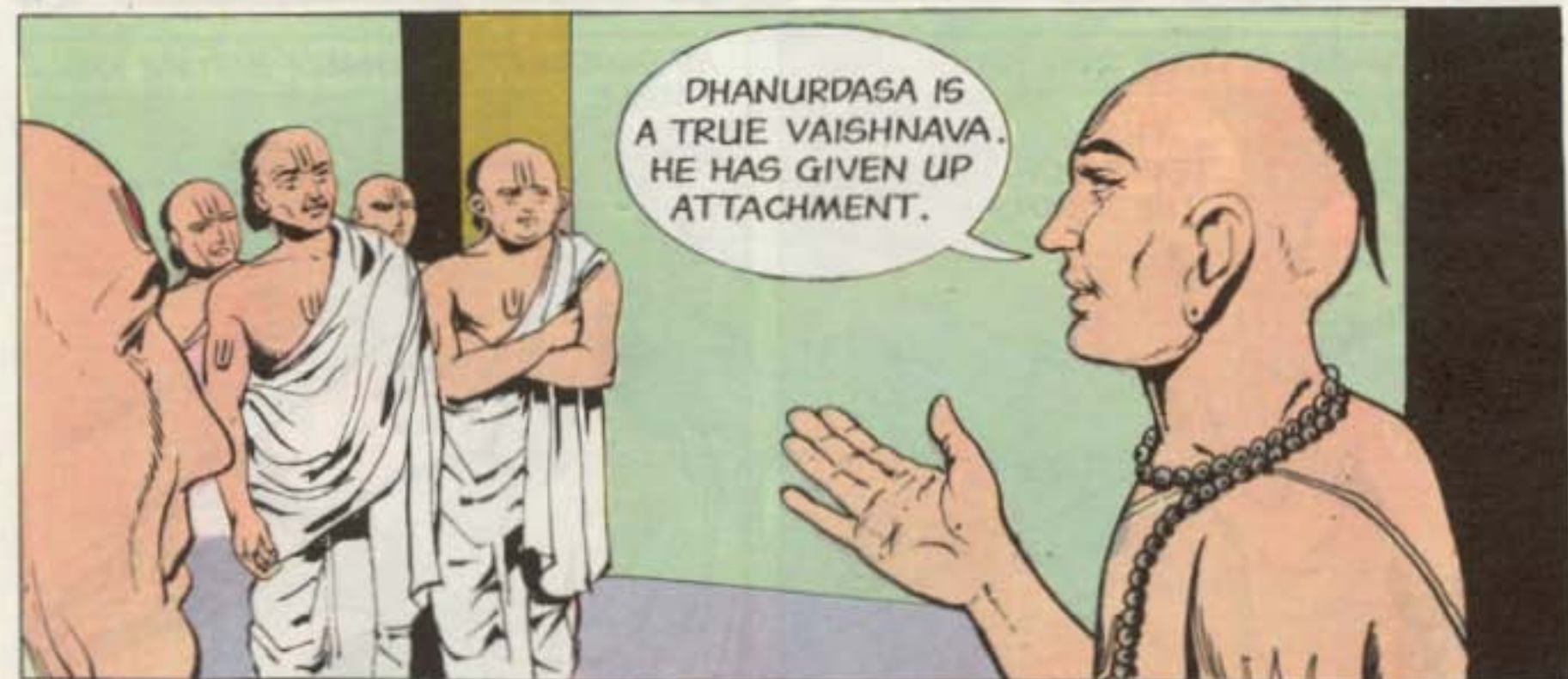
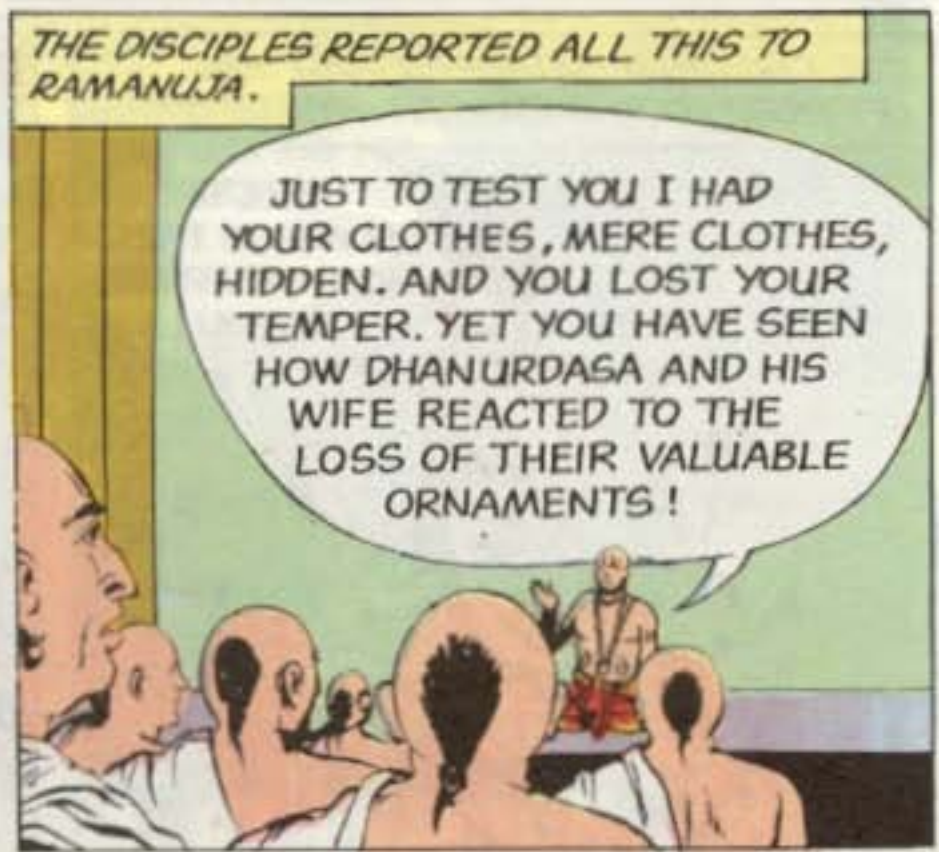
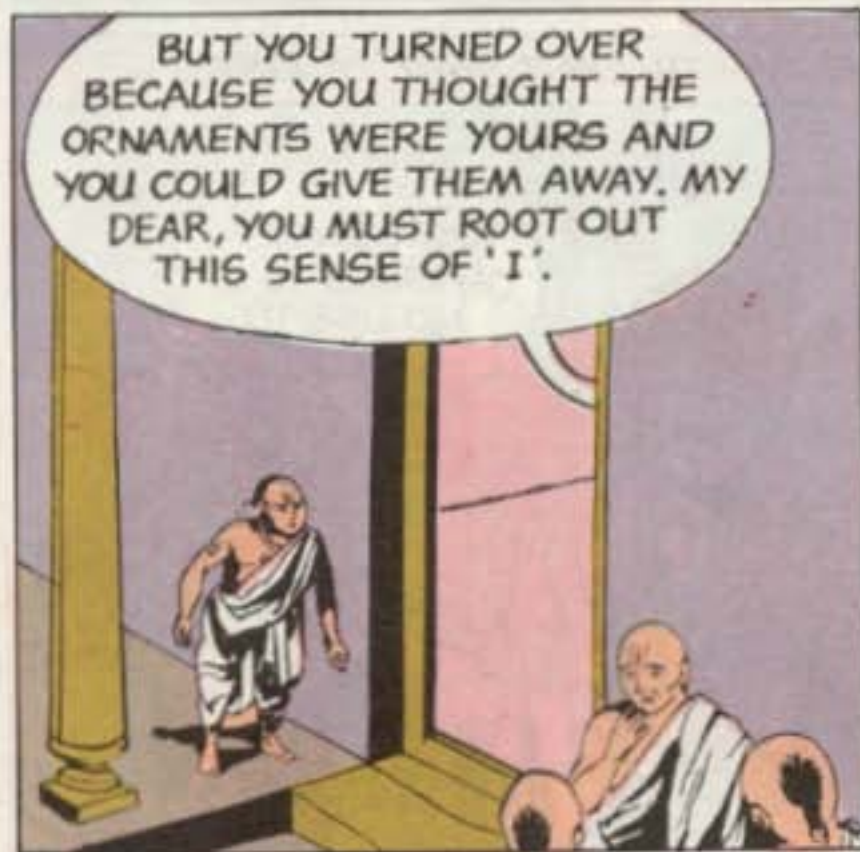


WHEN THE DISCIPLES RETURNED —



DHANURDASA LEFT, AND THE DISCIPLES REPORTED THE SUCCESS OF THEIR MISSION.

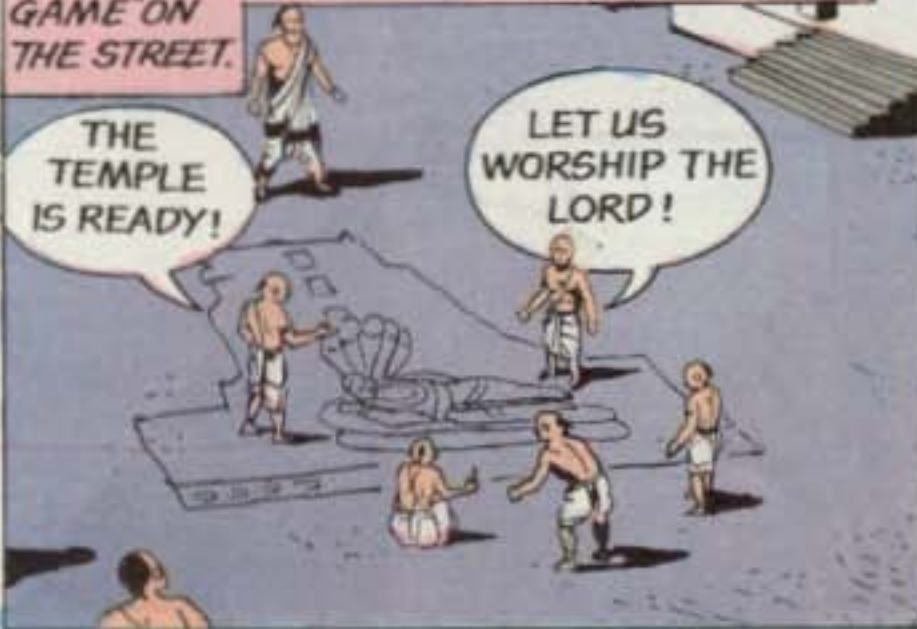




RAMANUJA USED TO TREAT ALL, EVEN CHILDREN WITH RESPECT. ONCE, A GROUP OF URCHINS WERE PLAYING "THE TEMPLE GAME" ON THE STREET.

THE TEMPLE IS READY!

LET US WORSHIP THE LORD!



AFTER THE 'WORSHIP'—

NOW LET US DISTRIBUTE THE DEITY'S SWEET OFFERING.



THE CHILDREN GATHERED DUST AND OFFERED IT TO A PASSER-BY.

HERE'S SOME OF THE HOLY OFFERING FOR YOU!



THE MAN THREW IT AWAY, LAUGHING—

YOUR SWEET OFFERING IS OF NO USE TO ME!



WHEN RAMANUJA CAME THAT WAY—

THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD!



HE PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE THE TEMPLE.



THE DISCIPLES WERE SHOCKED.

WHY, IT WAS BUT A
PICTURE AND THEY
WERE PLAYING A
GAME.

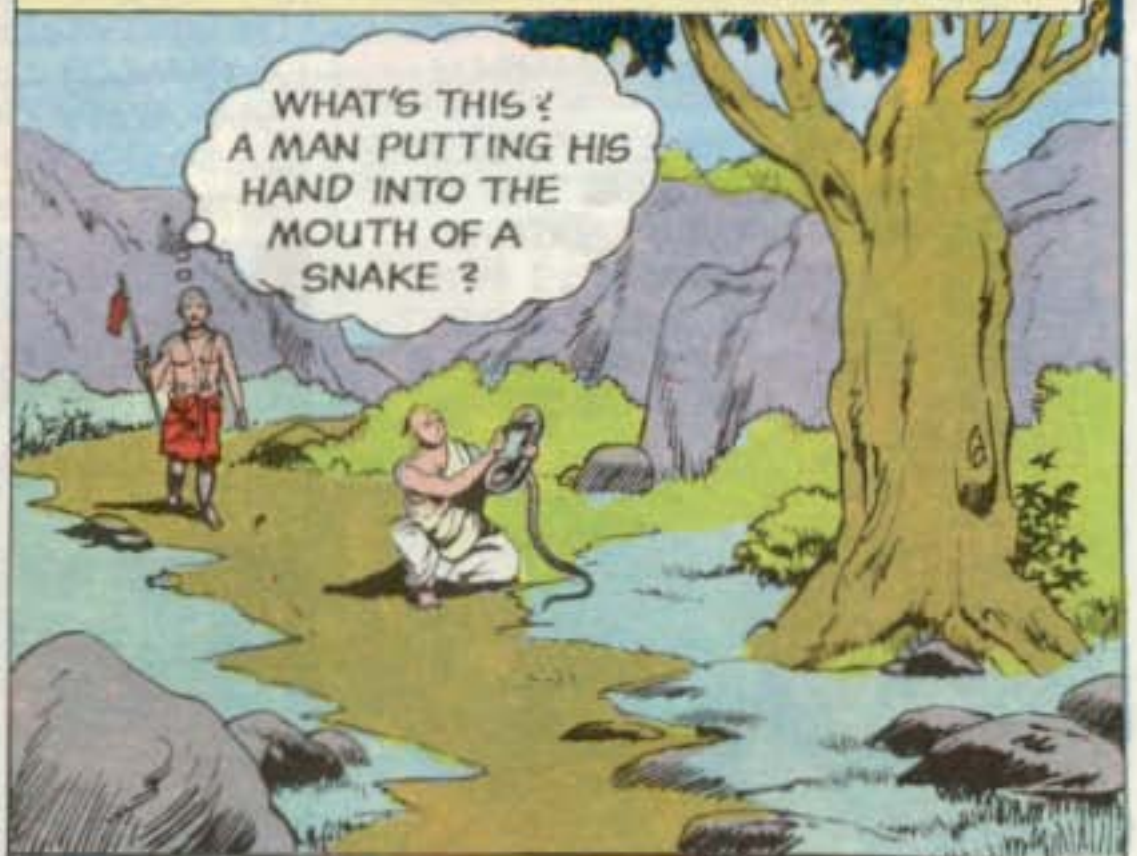
IT MAY LOOK
LIKE A GAME TO
US. BUT THE CHILDREN
SEE GOD IN THIS
TEMPLE AND,
THEREFORE,
HE IS HERE!

LATER RAMANUJA WENT TO
TIRUPATI ON A PILGRIMAGE.



LORD
VENKATESHA!

WHILE HE WAS WALKING HOME FROM THE TEMPLE —



WHAT'S THIS?
A MAN PUTTING HIS
HAND INTO THE
MOUTH OF A
SNAKE?



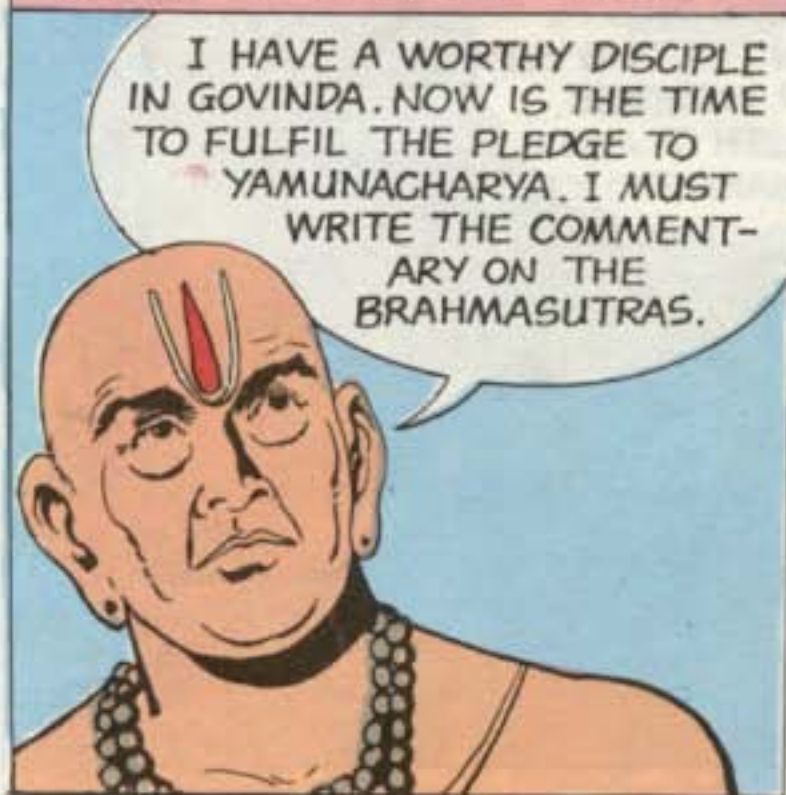
IT'S YOU,
GOVINDA!

JUST A MOMENT!
I AM REMOVING A THORN
WHICH HAS GOT STUCK
IN THE TONGUE OF THIS
POOR CREATURE.

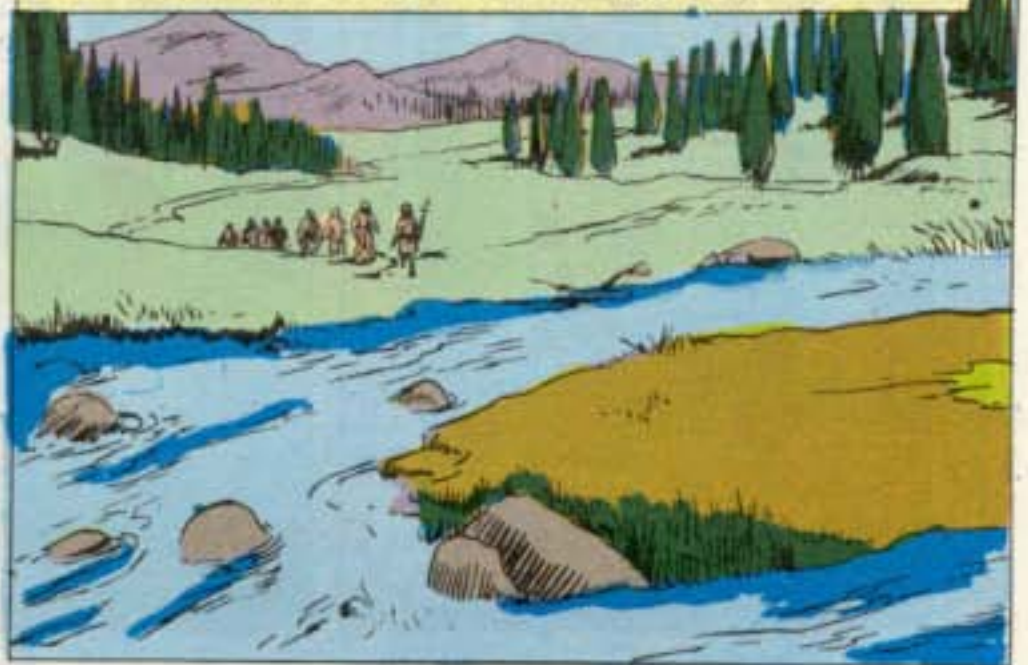
WHEN GOVINDA FINISHED HIS WORK AND GOT UP, RAMANUJA EMBRACED HIM.



THEY RETURNED TO SRIRANGAM —



RAMANUJA LEFT WITH HIS DISCIPLES FOR FAR-AWAY KASHMIR, TO PROCURE AND STUDY AN OLD COMMENTARY ON THE BRAHMA-SUTRAS BY THE PHILOSOPHER, BODHAYANA.



ON REACHING KASHMIR, HE CALLED ON THE SCHOLARS THERE, AND TOLD THEM WHAT HE WANTED. BUT —



THEN RAMANUJA SOUGHT THE HELP OF THE KING OF KASHMIR.

KNOWLEDGE BELONGS TO ALL WHO SEEK IT. PLEASE MAKE BODHAYANA'S WORK AVAILABLE TO US.



THE KING WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY THE FORCE OF RAMANUJA'S ARGUMENTS AND BY HIS PERSONALITY.

THE ACHARYA IS RIGHT. GIVE HIM THE WORK OF BODHAYANA. HE CAN TAKE IT TO SRIRANGAM.

WE BOW TO YOUR WISHES.



KURESHA, ONE OF RAMANUJA'S DISCIPLES, STEPPED FORWARD AND RECEIVED BODHAYANA'S WORK.

YOU WON'T KEEP THIS FOR LONG.



THE NEXT DAY THEY BEGAN THEIR JOURNEY BACK TO SRIRANGAM. SUDDENLY—

SURRENDER THE WORK, IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE!



THUS THE PRECIOUS WORK WAS TAKEN AWAY BY FORCE. BUT—



ACHARYA, DON'T WORRY. I SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT READING IT. I HAVE MEMORISED EVERY WORD.

HOW GLAD I AM TO HEAR YOU SAY THIS, KURESHA!

AT SRIRANGAM, KURESHA MADE A COPY OF BODHAYANA'S COMMENTARY FROM MEMORY. RAMANUJA STUDIED IT AND WROTE 'SRIBHASHYA', A COMMENTARY ON THE BRAHMASUTRAS.



RAMANUJA ALSO WROTE 'VEDARTHA SANGRAHA', A WORK ON THE UPANISHADS, THE 'GITA BHASHYA', A COMMENTARY ON THE GITA, AND OTHER WORKS.

WHEN RAMANUJA WAS SEVENTY-NINE YEARS OLD, HE HAD TO LEAVE SRIRANGAM AS THE KING HAD BEGUN TO PERSECUTE THE SRIVAISHNAVAS.



HOWEVER, HE RECEIVED A WARM WELCOME IN THE HOYSALA KINGDOM IN KARNATAKA. KING BITTIDEVA HIMSELF RECEIVED HIM.



MASTER, MAKE KARNATAKA YOUR HOME AND BLESS US.

BITTIDEVA BECAME RAMANUJA'S DISCIPLE AND ASSUMED THE NAME 'VISHNU VARDHANA'.

RAMANUJA TOURED KARNATAKA AND SPREAD THE SRIVAISHNAVA PHILOSOPHY. ONCE WHILE PASSING THROUGH A FOREST NEAR YADUGIRI—

HM, THE FRAGRANCE OF THE TULSI PLANT!



HE FOLLOWED THE SCENT—

THE FRAGRANCE EMANATES FROM THIS ANT-HILL. DIG IT UP!



LAYERS OF EARTH WERE DUG AWAY AND...



...RAMANUJA BENT DOWN AND RETRIEVED AN IDOL OF NARAYANA.

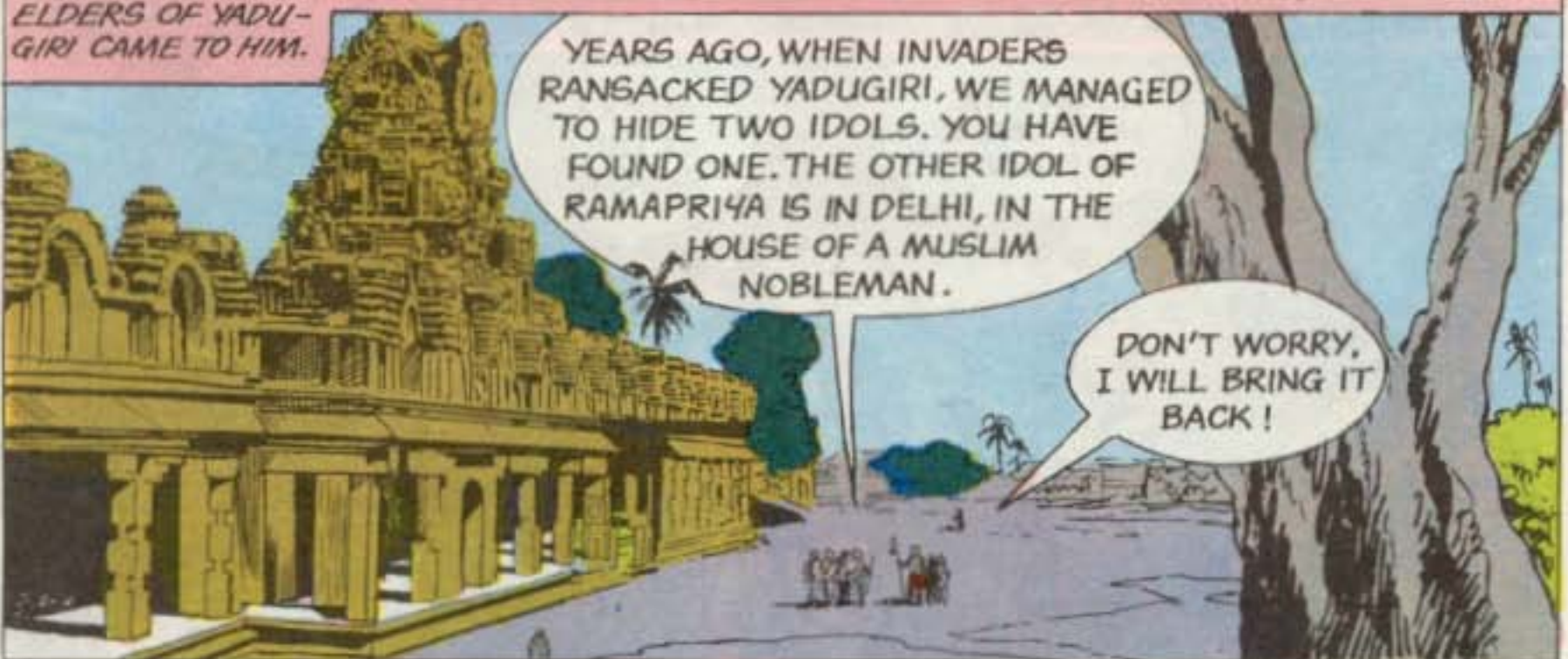


MY LORD!

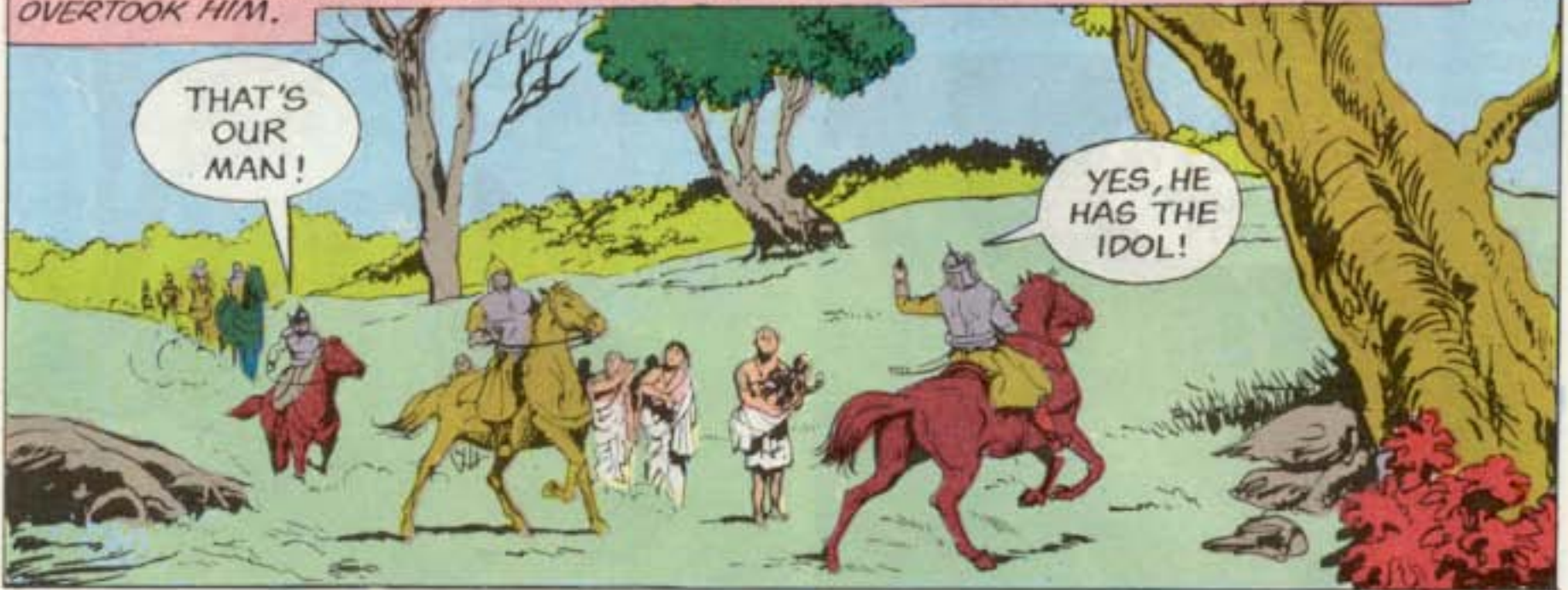
RAMANUJA HAD A TEMPLE BUILT THERE AND CONSECRATED THE IDOL. LATER, SOME OF THE ELDERS OF YADUGIRI CAME TO HIM.

YEARS AGO, WHEN INVADERS RANSACKED YADUGIRI, WE MANAGED TO HIDE TWO IDOLS. YOU HAVE FOUND ONE. THE OTHER IDOL OF RAMAPRIYA IS IN DELHI, IN THE HOUSE OF A MUSLIM NOBLEMAN.

DON'T WORRY, I WILL BRING IT BACK!



RAMANUJA CALLED ON THE NOBLEMAN AND OBTAINED THE IDOL. HE SET OUT ON HIS RETURN JOURNEY. WHEN HE HAD ALMOST REACHED YADUGIRI, A GROUP OF RAIDERS OVERTOOK HIM.



THEY SURROUNDED HIM.



HE HAD SECOND THOUGHTS AFTER YOU LEFT. HIS DAUGHTER WANTS IT BACK.

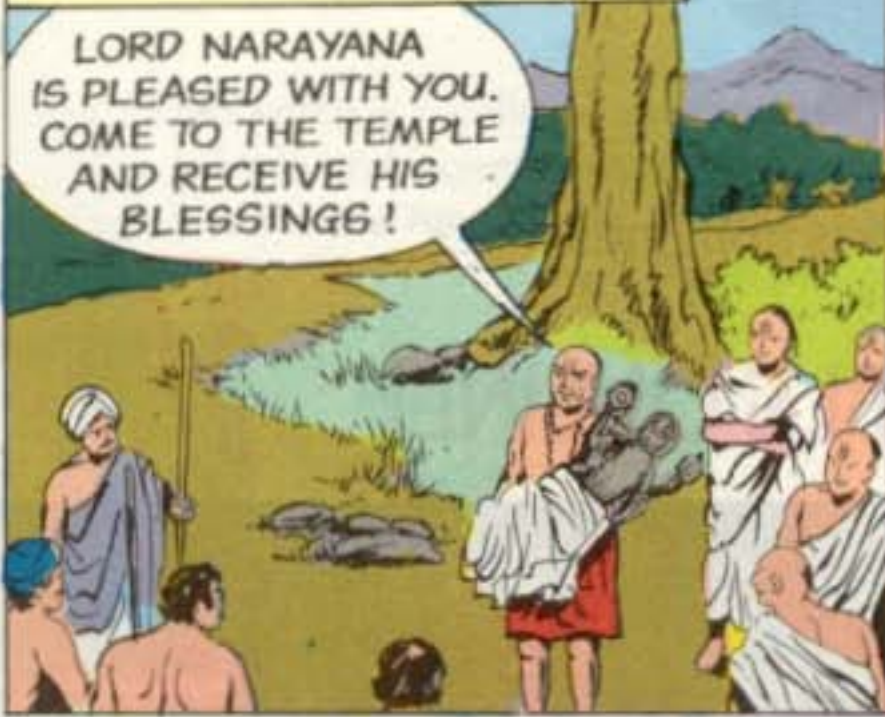


JUST THEN, A GROUP OF VILLAGERS HAPPENED TO PASS BY—



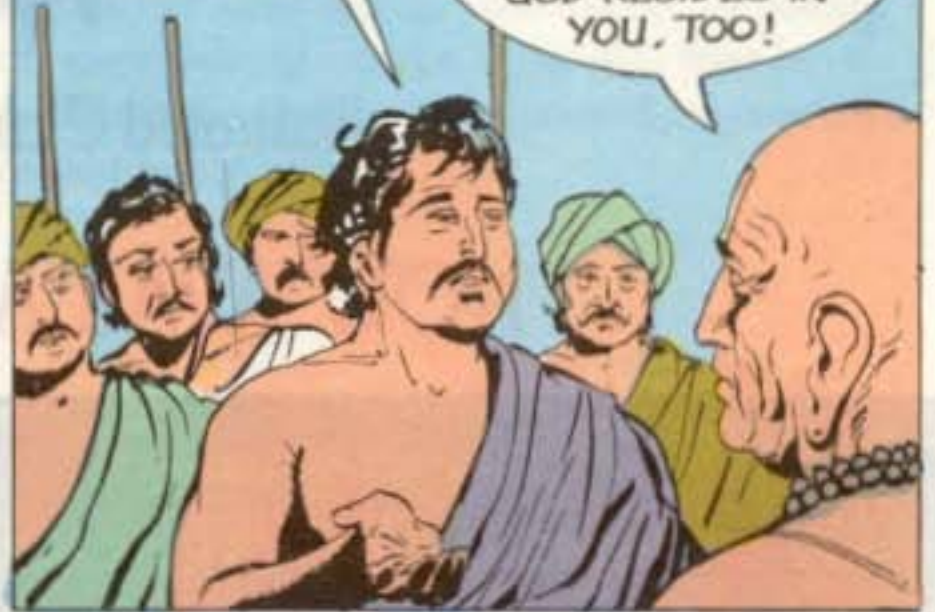
THEY FELL UPON THE RAIDERS FROM DELHI AND DROVE THEM AWAY.

LORD NARAYANA IS PLEASED WITH YOU. COME TO THE TEMPLE AND RECEIVE HIS BLESSINGS!



WE CAN'T! WE ARE UNTOUCHABLES!

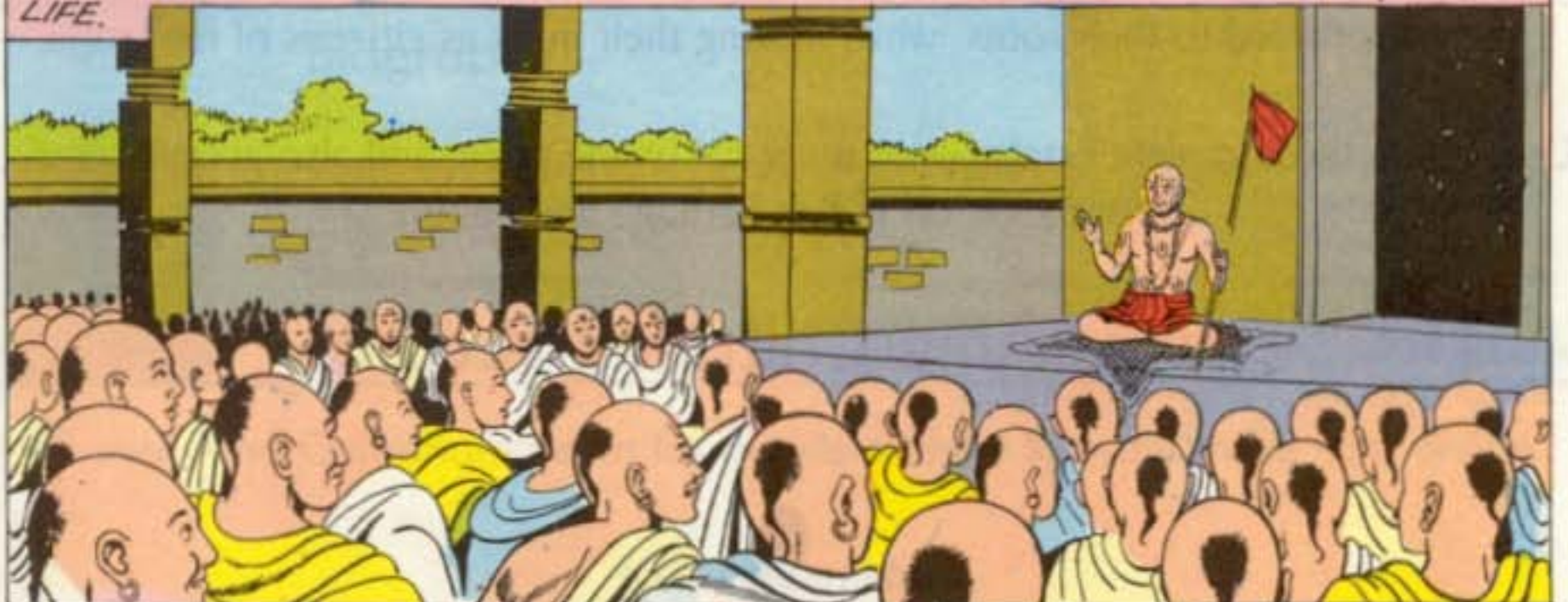
YOU ARE CHILDREN OF GOD! BELIEVE ME, THE ALL-PERVADING GOD RESIDES IN YOU, TOO!



RAMANUJA THREW OPEN THE TEMPLE OF TIRU NARAYANA AT YADUGIRI TO ALL CASTES.



LATER, RAMANUJA RETURNED TO SRIRANGAM, WHERE HE SPENT THE REST OF HIS LIFE.





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Ramanuja

Ramanuja (1017-1137), the great Vaishnava saint-philosopher, upheld *bhakti* (loving surrender to God) as the sole path to the realisation of God. His school of philosophy is known as Vishishta-Advaita (qualified monism) and his followers, the Srivaishnavas.

He wrote commentaries on the Brahmasutras, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita. It was his view that these three philosophical texts proclaim *bhakti* as the chief means of realising God.

In his life and teachings, Ramanuja upheld that all humans are born equal and that caste or social status has no role in determining one's relationship with God. He accepted Kanchi Purna, who was not a Brahmin, as his guru. One of his most worthy disciples, Dhanurdasa, was a non-Brahmin from a lower caste. For Ramanuja, a Vaishnava (man of God) is worthy of respect; but he defined as a true Vaishnava only one who has abundant love for God.

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